Orthophonie
VoxLingue
Speech and Language

Printable sheet

The daycare question at 3: the order of questions, three steps and five ways to ask

"What did you do at daycare?" is about what isn't there, in the past, when your child is tired. Around 3, going quiet, repeating the question or answering off topic is expected. Their answers are clues about the question, not a refusal.

The order in which children understand questions

Yes or no	Choice	Where, who, what	How many, who with, what with	Why, how, when	What they can't see
"Are you hungry?"	"Juice or milk?"	"Where's your hat?"	"Who did you play with?", photo in hand	"Why is the dog barking?"	"What did you do at daycare?"

No ages: every child climbs at their own pace. What's in front of them is easier to understand.

Three steps to help them understand

1. **The question, once, with no clue**
   "Who's going to wash the carrots?" Wait about 5 seconds.
2. **A clue: a gesture or two choices**
   "Who's going to wash the carrots? Daddy or you?" Touch Daddy, then them. Wait.
3. **The question and its answer**
   "Who's going to wash the carrots? Daddy!" Point to Daddy, and carry on.

They don't have to repeat. No "say it". Carry on, whatever they do.

Five ways to ask the daycare question

Later: at dinner, bath time or bedtime

From what's there: "Oh, a bird! Who helped you make it?"

As a choice: "Did you play outside or stay inside?"

Specific and short: "Who made you laugh today?"

A comment, then wait: "You've got paint on your sleeve!"

If nothing comes, give the answer you know: "You painted with Leah!"

Same answer, two questions

To the question about their day	going quiet, repeating or answering off topic: expected around 3.
To simple questions about what's there	"Where's your shoe?", "Juice or milk?": if it's most of the time, even when rested and in their strongest language, talk to someone.

Simple questions go past them most of the time, or they often say "what?"?

In Québec, contact the CLSC or ask the doctor (Agir tôt, free, under 7). At the same time, a private consultation if you can. Have their hearing checked if it never has been. In Ontario: Preschool Speech and Language, no doctor's referral needed.

The order of questions and the three steps: speech-language pathologists at the CISSS de Chaudière-Appalaches (2024, in French). Other sources: Montreal Children's Hospital (2020); Naître et grandir (2025); Québec.ca, Agir tôt program. **General information: this sheet does not replace an assessment.**