

## Cuisenaire Questions

<b>Language focus</b>	Questions forms.
<b>Learning skills</b>	Using visual/ tactile input to reinforce auditory memory.
<b>Time</b>	20 minutes
<b>Preparation and equipment</b>	Sheets with sample sentence/question pairs on (enough for each pair to have a different one each); Cuisenaire rods; small labels (optional). Interactive white board to show how the words can be moved around (optional).

*Learners with SpLDs often benefit from using tactile materials and assigning colour to different concepts, making Cuisenaire rods extremely valuable in the language classroom. They can be obtained fairly easily from educational suppliers, or other objects could be used, such as different coloured seeds and stones, or even strips of paper in different colours and lengths.*

### Example Procedure (elementary level):

- 1) Elicit some statement sentences using the simple present from the class. Try to get a range of sentences, using different subjects. Type 3 of them onto the board / Write 3 of them in large print on a sheet of paper, and ask them to get around a table, where they can all see what you are doing (or, use blu-tac to stick the Cuisenaire rods to the board). If using an interactive white board, have the 'blocks' already up on the board, ready to manipulate.
- 2) Using the students' statement sentences lay the Cuisenaire rods out under each word saying each word as you do. (There is no set convention for which rods to use for each part of the sentence but it is important that it is done consistently each time. In the example a short red rod is used for the subject a light green rod for the verb and a long blue rod for the complement of the sentences. It can be helpful for some learners if you label the rods in this way using sticky labels at least for the first few times that they use them. You might think about using pictures or symbols for the complement to start with as well to help the learners think of it as a single unit.)
- 3) With sentences that have 'he' or 'she' as a subject use a small white cube to show the extra '-s' on the verb.
- 4) After you have done a few, turn the paper over so it is just a blank canvas and ask a student to build the same sentences, laying out the rods as s/he says the words. Let a few students have a go at this, making the same sentences, but without the written prompts.
- 5) Introduce one of the sample pages of statement / question pairs. Build the statement sentence as before and then introduce a different coloured rod to build the question form with (in the example a yellow one is used for the auxiliary verb: 'to do') – and explain that it shows that a question is coming. Lay out the other rods and show that the word order is the same apart from the extra rod at the beginning, the 'do / does / did rod'.
- 6) With questions using 'she' or 'he' as a subject remind them to move the small white cube (indicating the '-s') to the question rod (auxiliary verb).
- 7) Let some of the students have a go as before. When they seem confident enough give each pair a few rods and some of the sample sheets and ask them to take it in turns to make the sentences and the corresponding questions, saying the words as they lay out the rods.

- 8) Go round and monitor, to make sure that the word order is correct, and that the '-s' is being added and moved when necessary. Point out that the pattern stays the same: red – green – blue, even when you add a 'do / does / did' rod. *NB – the order does change if you use the verb 'To be' and make a question with it, and when using perfect tenses.*
- 9) Ask the students to turn over their sheets and make up their own questions, perhaps using picture prompts, either writing them or reporting them orally, as appropriate.

**Make it easier:**

👁️ Use only statements and questions using the verb 'to be'. Introduce negatives, too, before moving on to the present simple form of other verbs.

**Make it harder:**

👁️ Introduce other more complex structures, such as the present perfect or conditional forms.

**Differentiate:**

Give students sheets appropriate to the structures they need to become familiar with.

Sample sentence/question pairs with the rods shown:

I	like	chocolate.	
			
Do	you	like	chocolate?
			
He	lives	in Britain.	
			
Does	he	live	in Britain?
			

*Note: An arrow points from the white end of the green rod in the 'He lives in Britain.' row to the white end of the yellow rod in the 'Does he live in Britain?' row.*

Cuisenaire rods are great for introducing new sentence patterns, and in future sessions, the rods can be used to reinforce word order (for example, if the auxiliary verb is forgotten – simply hold up the yellow rod to remind the learners what is missing).

*NB – when demonstrating to a group, remember to do it the right way round for **them** to see the sentence forming from left to right!*