Language skills in the science classroom:

speaking

When we ask closed questions, students respond with short-form answers. Often that means they are only using basic conversational language. This checklist provides ideas to help encourage more extensive discussion involving scientific language.

1. Use open-ended questions, starting with ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ to encourage students to give longer answers.

2. Respond to students’ responses to check meaning, and ask the class to expand or comment on the answer.

3. Use group work and give students clear roles so every student participates in the discussion.

4. Ask students to teach, or present to their peers.

5. Give students time to think after asking a question, to ensure answers are well-thought through.