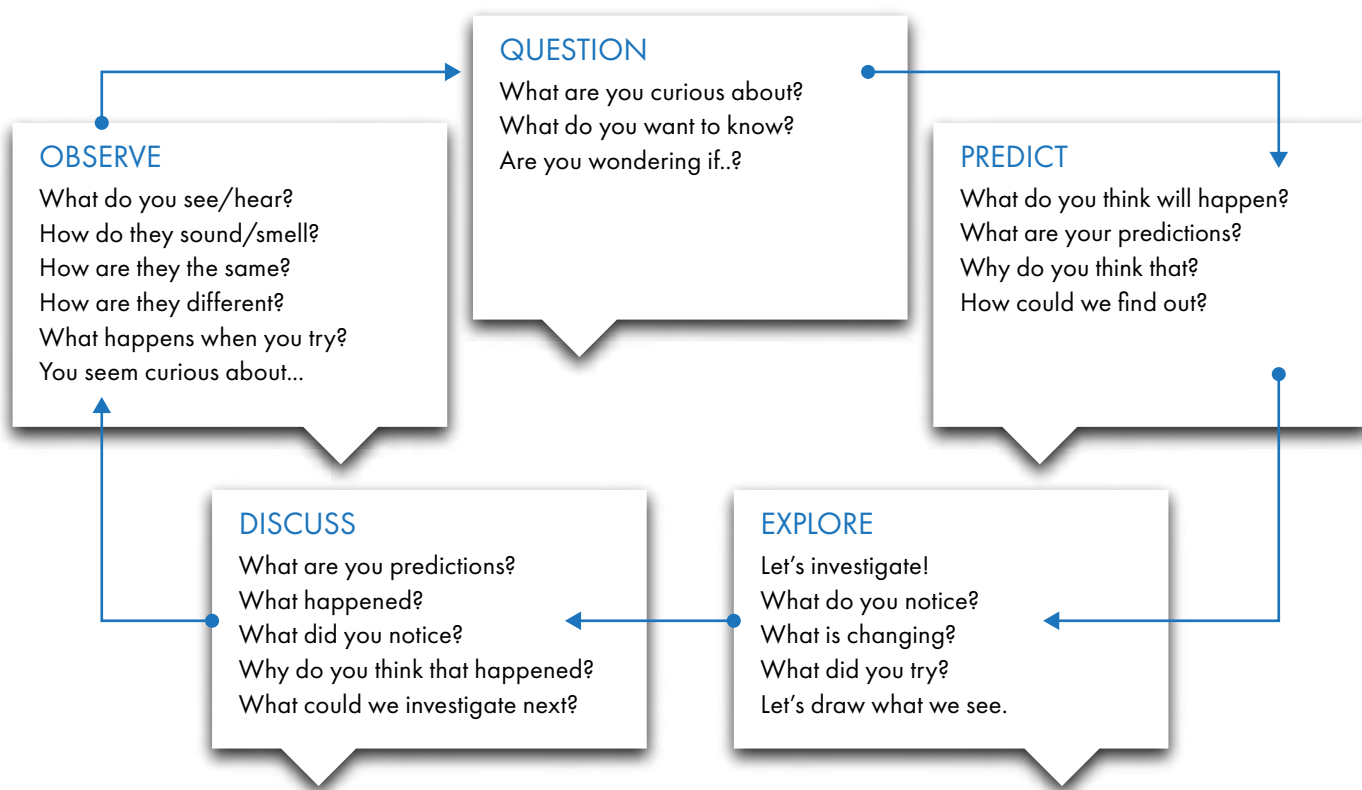




THE INQUIRY CYCLE

The cycle of inquiry (or scientific method) is a thinking tool—not a specific activity. This tool leads us through the process of questioning, exploring, predicting, discussing, and observing something of interest. Rather than focusing on learning scientific facts, when we take the time to observe things in our environment we become curious and begin to ask questions. Curiosity and asking questions (inquiry) is what helps children learn about the world around them. Inquiry builds critical thinking skills and supports problem solving across the domains of learning and development, which is key to children’s school readiness and independent learning throughout life.

The inquiry cycle is not always straightforward. We move back and forth through the steps because we might notice something new or realize we have a new question after exploring more. Practice asking the following questions with children to help them learn about their world.



- Encourage children to ask questions in their home languages whenever possible. If you do not know the home language, provide visual aids that children can use to communicate their thinking.
- Adjust your questions to match a child’s current level of receptive and expressive language and/or English.
- Allow children to communicate in the language(s) in which they feel most comfortable to support curiosity and questioning.
- Keep in mind that children who are dual language learners may be actively engaged by listening to others’ observations but may not yet feel confident to respond in English.
- Children develop their comprehension and communication skills as they make predictions, plan explorations, describe findings, document observations, and explain their reasoning (“Why did it happen?”). They also learn how to engage in small group conversation.