

## Tips for supporting children for build vocabulary



### 1. Read. A lot!

Read all sorts of books, signs on the wall, directions, recipes... A wide variety of reading material will expose children to a wide variety of new words.

### 2. Spot new words

Notice new words when you're reading or listening. Talk about the importance of a large vocabulary and make an effort to learn new words.

### 3. Find the meanings of words

Talk about what to do when we discover unknown words. Show children how to use picture and context clues or use another resource to find the meaning. Teach children to locate words in the dictionary or use an online resource...but focus on child-friendly definitions.

### 4. Keep track of the words you know

List them; put them in groups; play games with them; revisit them. Children need multiple exposures to words in order to really learn them.

### 5. Focus on learning the right kinds of words

Pick words that are more complex or descriptive versions of common words that children already know. Also, focus on technical words which will help children understand a concept or a task that they are currently learning about.

### 6. Look for words in words

Talk about the meaning of word roots, **prefixes** and **suffixes**. By knowing one word, you can understand many more. E.g. root: help, suffixes **helpful**, **helpless**, **helper**, **helping**; prefixes **unhelpful**

### 7. Interact with the words in some way

Draw their meaning; act them out; say them; write them; make them come alive so you'll remember them.

### 8. Make words real

Try to find concrete examples of new words; look for images to support understanding; relate them to real life understanding; make connections with things you know.

### 9. Have fun with words

Show that you enjoy the challenge of learning new words and have fun with your children playing with words. To help with this we have provided a list of some of our favourite word games.

## Word Games



### **Word collecting**

Ask each family member to look out for interesting words that they hear that day. Share the words and think about meanings. Try to use some of the words in conversation.

### **Word association**

Start with a word and ask your child to say a connected word. Take it in turns and see where you end up. E.g. Football, foot, toe, nail, hammer, toolbox, shed...

For older children – add the rule that there must be no pausing or hesitating.

### **Precise noun pictures**

**Nouns** are things. Using pictures (“You Choose” is a great book for this) get children to talk about the things that they can see. Encourage them to be precise and teach them more precise nouns. By typing a noun into a search engine, you can immediately find lots of different images.

e.g. **house** – bungalow, flat, mansion... and **flower** – rose, daffodil, daisy...

### **Synonym sort**

Make lists of synonyms (words with similar meanings) for two different words. Cut up the words, jumble them and ask your child to put them back into two different groups. For older children, try adding more complex words (use a thesaurus or right click on a computer word to find a list of synonyms) or missing up 3 lists of synonyms.

### **Opposite (antonyms)**

Write a list of **antonyms** (words which mean the opposite). Choose words appropriate to your child’s vocabulary. Muddle them up and ask your child to match them up again correctly e.g. **old/new, tall/short, greedy/generous, helpful/disruptive**

### **Word categories**

Choose a category and ask children to think of as many words as possible to fit that category.

For younger children, the categories can be simple: pets, clothes, family members.

For older children, the categories can be quite complex: the War, astronomy, maths terms.

### **Walk this way**

Choose a word describing an action. How can you be more precise about it? Change the **verb** (doing word).

Younger children: I **went** – **skipped, hopped, bounced, danced, rolled, leapt**

Older children: I **walked** – **stumbled, trudged, sauntered, sneaked, wandered, dashed**

### **Rainbow colours**

Encourage your children to describe colours precisely. Point out shades of colours and think about how they are described and what they are compared to e.g. cherry, tangerine, primrose-yellow, caramel, moss-green...

## Word Games



### **Preposition treasure hunt**

**Prepositions** describe how things are related. Use prepositions to describe where an object / the treasure is e.g. **behind, next to, against, above, under...**

Can your child find it? Encourage them to have a go at describing.

You can play this when looking at “Where’s Wally” pictures too.

### **Draw it**

Describe a picture to your child (imaginary or real) and ask them to draw it. Compare the pictures. What is different? How could we describe it more precisely so that the drawings match? Ask your child to describe so that you can draw. They love our drawings!

### **Adjective alphabet**

**Adjectives** describe nouns. Try to come up with an adjective for each letter of the alphabet e.g. A is for **angry**, B is for **beautiful**....

### **How do you say it?**

Give your child a short sentence to say. How many different **verbs** can you think of to describe how you say it? Try them out. E.g. **whisper, groan, order, stammer...**

### **How many words?**

Start with a word and ask children to see how many words with a similar meaning (**synonyms**) that they can think of.

Good starting words include: fun, good, happy, sad, bad, big, small, nice, went, saw

Older children: Can you put the words in order to show their shades of meaning?

e.g. **gloomy, miserable, depressed, heartbroken** (all synonyms for sad)

### **Whose baby?**

Help children to find out the names of animal babies. Write the animal name and match it to the baby name e.g. horse – foal, sheep – lamb

For younger children: make the animal noise and link this to the animal and its baby

### **Change the mood**

**Adverbs of manner** tell us how something is done. Start with a simple action (real or in a picture) and think of adverbs that could change the mood. What is different now?

What could be happening? e.g. She stared. She stared **sadly**. She stared **angrily**. She stared **threateningly**. She stared **greedily**.

### **Helpful links for building vocabulary:**

<http://kids.wordsmyth.net/wild/> - online kid’s illustration dictionary searchable by category or scene.

[www.lexipedia.com](http://www.lexipedia.com) – look up words meanings and find synonyms.

[www.knoword.org](http://www.knoword.org) – vocabulary game when you get a definition and have to think of the word.

<http://www.kwarp.com/portfolio/grammarninja.html> - match words to their word class.

Don’t forget our **Grammar Glossary** on the Parent Support page of our website too.