



It's all about having fun with words

Be a word detective and seek out new words! New words can be found everywhere. Be confident and creative with how you and your child play with words.

If you have fun with words, your child will have fun with words. These word play ideas need very little equipment or planning:

> Clap out syllables/beats of interesting words you come across, eg in-vi-si-ble = 4 claps.

- > Treasure hunt for words. Talk about words that relate to each other, eg words about body parts or insects.
- > Take turns thinking of words that start with a given sound, eg 'r' for robot, rainbow, rotate, ring, etc.
- > Play 'I spy...'. Make it more interesting than the traditional version, eg 'I spy with my little eye something coloured red... something spiky/spongy/inside/outside', etc.



Growing words through talk: boosting vocabulary

Knowing many and interesting words helps children to understand and talk more precisely about their world. A broad vocabulary is also important for reading and writing. Growing vocabulary needs to begin from an early age and continues throughout life.

There are lots of ways you can help boost children's vocabulary as part of their early literacy learning.

Learning new words should be fun! This can happen in everyday activities and play and will help lay the foundations for learning to read and write.

REFERENCES

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First developed by the department's speech pathology Talking Literacy Working Group (2011). Refreshed September 2021, Department for Education.





Boosting vocabulary throughout the day

Listening to stories promotes vocabulary learning as they contain interesting words children don't typically hear in everyday conversation. Books introduce new words and opportunities to talk about what the words mean. Revisit the words later in the day and week, to connect the words to your child's world.

Daily activities such as in the supermarket or at lunch times supports rich conversations for new word learning, eg 'This paper is my receipt, it shows everything I bought and how much I paid. Each time I go to the shops I get a receipt.'

Pretend play provides opportunities to hear and pick up new words, eg while playing 'doctor' introduce and explain words like patient and bandage.

Which words should I choose?

Select a few words. You know your child best, so choose words that suit their needs and interests. These words might be:

- > **simple everyday words** like 'plate' or 'puppy'
- > **more interesting words** or wow words to boost your child's vocabulary.

Include:

- > naming words, eg pouch
- > action words, eg floating
- > describing words, eg enormous.

Simple words:
water
swimming
small



Wow words:
seahorse
drifting
miniature

How can I help my child learn words?

Define: talk about the meaning of the word

Say the word clearly and explain the meaning, eg '**Enormous** means really, really big.'

Describe what the word is and isn't, eg '**Enormous** is really, really big. It's not small like a baby, or even big like an adult. It's really, really big, like a tall building.'

Do: show the meaning of the word

Show what the word means and give real life examples. Find pictures that show the word meaning, use facial expressions, use gesture, change the way you say the word, eg a tired voice for 'weary'.

Relate the word to existing knowledge and experiences by linking new words and experiences to ones they already know, eg 'The truck is **enormous**! It's a really, really big truck! Can you think of something really, really big that is enormous?'

Revise: revisit the word many times

Give the child hands on experiences using the new words. Revisit the word in different ways during the week. This will help strengthen their understanding and use of the word.

Teach it until they talk it back to you!

