

Supporting Vocabulary Development in Everyday Activities

Top Tips for Parents



*A resource developed by Speech and Language Therapists from the
Demonstration Project on In-school and Early Years Therapy Support and
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Top Tips for Developing Your Child's Vocabulary

Why is vocabulary important?

Having a good vocabulary helps children think and learn about the world around them. The more words a child knows, the more information they have access to and the easier it is for them to communicate with those in their environment.

How can I help my child develop their vocabulary?

As a parent, you are in the unique position to be able to model words and language for your child. You are their first teacher!

On a daily basis, you can support your child with their vocabulary development in a variety of ways. Remember to:

- ✓ Use actions or gestures that go with the words you say - learning a sign or action for a word can help children to remember and understand the word.
- ✓ Model the correct production of words for your child. Accept that the way they say a word may not be exactly right yet e.g. if a child says 'tar', you say 'that's right, it's a car'.
- ✓ Try to avoid directly asking your child to say a word. This can put pressure on a child and sometimes discourages them from talking.
- ✓ Repeat, repeat, repeat...children need to hear new words many times, so repeat a word many times for your child e.g. 'the **tractor** is driving, the **tractor** is noisy, it is a red **tractor**.'



Ideas for helping your child hear and learn new words:



★ Talk as you do everyday activities and play:

Follow your child's lead - As your child plays or shows interest in things, say the words for them and repeat them often, in lots of different contexts e.g. for a child interested in leaves on a walk, use words like *tree, leaves, green, shiny* etc. Talk about other contexts e.g. *we have leaves in our garden; some leaves change from green to brown; we eat salad leaves at lunchtime.*

Modelling during everyday tasks - As you are completing everyday tasks e.g. cooking, out for a walk, playing a game with your child etc., comment on what you are doing using simple words and phrases e.g. *Mummy is making a cake; Daddy is hanging out the washing.*

★ **Expand what your child says:** If your child gives a short or incomplete answer, add extra words to what they have said e.g. if they say *ball*, you can say *'yes it's a green ball', 'let's bounce the ball'*.

★ **Use Short Sentences:** Keep your sentences short, it is easier for your child to learn a new word when the word is not in a complex sentence.

★ **Read:** Reading books is a great way to learn new words. Comment on the pictures in the book and point to them as you say the word.



See the resource - Book Talk - for more information.

★ **Nursery Rhymes and Songs:** Saying nursery rhymes helps your child to hear lots of words. You can use lots of actions and gesture as you sing e.g. for

'Round and Round the Garden' make a circle on their palm, for 'Itsy Bitsy Spider', act out the spider going up the spout with your hands.

See the resource - Fun with Nursery Rhymes - for more information.

- **Talk about the different parts of things:** When your child knows the names of certain things or objects, talk about their parts e.g. 'the dog has **paws** and a **tail**'.



- ★ **Name action words:** Name action words in the moment as they are happening e.g. if you are **brushing** your teeth, or **washing** dishes, or **eating** dinner, name the action for your child.



- ★ **Have fun with words** - play increases children's exposure to words and promotes new word learning. Follow your child's lead and make time to play with them. For example, you can use location words while playing with blocks e.g. *up, down, in, out, on top, under, beside* or action words while playing with sand e.g. *pour, fill, spill, dig, build, throw etc.*

