

# Vocabulary

In order to communicate, read, write, converse and participate in school or any activity, a strong foundation of vocabulary is a must. Vocabulary gives us the ability to convey our thoughts, feelings and opinions. It also allows us to understand what others are saying and trying to communicate to us.

## Tips for practicing vocabulary

- **Start by building a vocabulary of basic words before you introduce more elaborate vocabulary words and synonyms.** Introduce the word "big" before you introduce words like "enormous" or "huge."
- **If you are introducing a new word, use it as often as possible. If you introduce the new word only once it is unlikely that your child will remember and understand it.**
- **First, introduce the new word. Next give a child-friendly definition of the word and provide a relevant example. Encourage your child to use the word and give their own example.**
- **Use "real" words for objects instead of "made up" words.** If your child calls a cup "sip-sip" start using the word "cup" so that they develop a wider and more advanced vocabulary. This way they will also start to understand that what we use an object for and the name of an object are two different things.
- **Use new words in everyday play and conversation.** If your child already knows the word small try to use the word tiny one day instead and explain the meaning. Incorporate interesting words into conversations. Talk about all of the different things in our world and be detailed.
- **If your child uses vague terms (e.g. this, that, it) it might be because they don't know the words. Always repeat back his/her sentence with proper name vocabulary.** For example, if your child says "put this in that," repeat back the sentence with the proper terms: "put the doll in the toy box."



## Ideas for practicing vocabulary

- **Reading books:** Reading is one of the best ways to learn new vocabulary! Pick books that contain words that your child is unfamiliar with. After you are done reading, continue to use the new words in everyday conversation and play. Label the pictures and describe the actions with a variety of description words to introduce new vocabulary. Re-read books over and over again. You can use books that you already have and change the words in the book to incorporate new vocabulary. For example: If the book says 'tired,' change the word to 'exhausted' and define the word. Use that word in everyday conversations. "Look, Daddy is exhausted."



- **Scavenger hunts:** Create a themed scavenger hunt so that new words make more sense and connect to each other. Tell your child what they need to find and have them take a picture of it and create their "scavenger hunt book." This book is a great too to go back and keep practicing the new words. A visual also helps your child easily recognize what it is. One week could be farm week. This week you would go to the farm and ask you child to take pictures of a variety of animal that they are familiar and unfamiliar with. You can even have a kitchen week where the scavenger hut happens right in your kitchen!



- **Word of the week:** Every week choose at new word that your child is unfamiliar with. Post the word with an associated picture on the refrigerator. The goal of the week is to use the word as many times as possible. When it is time for a new word, keep the old words posted in a different area so that they are still around to promote usage.

- **Story telling:** Let your child tell you a story. Set the scene for them (pirate ship, toy store, space, jungle, etc.) and then let them use their imagination to greate a story. This activity will promote the use of the vocabulary. You can ask further questions to promote the use of their vocabulary. If your child said, "*The pirate ship was in the water.*" You could say, "*Was the pirate ship in the lake or ocean?*" This is taking that vocabulary to the next level by promoting more specific language.



- **Matching games:** Lay out two copies of a variety of picture cards for your child. Try to include some pictures of things that your child is unfamiliar with. Have your child try to find the match to each card. Every time they flip over a card, they must say what the object on the card is. Incorporate descriptive vocabulary by asking them questions about the object. If they flip over a card with a gorilla on it and they call it a monkey, say: "Yes, this is a gorilla. It is a type of monkey." Then, ask them questions, such as: Is the gorilla furry? Is the gorilla strong? Is the gorilla fast? Does the gorilla live in the jungle?



- **Go fishing:** Get together a variety of pictures of different objects. Try to incorporate some more challenging vocabulary words. Put paperclips on the pictures and 'go fishing' with a magnet on a string (the magnet will stick to the paperclip). Have your child name the picture they catch and describe what the object is.