

Speech and Language Therapy Activities

Expressive Language

How to support vocabulary learning in the classroom

What are word finding difficulties?

Children often find it difficult to remember a word they want to use. This may cause errors (e.g. naming 'cat' as 'dog'), a delay (e.g. 'it's aoh you know....um...a....') or having to describe the word (e.g. 'it goes on a horse, you sit on it').

How can you help?

1. If you think you know the word that the child is struggling to find, you may be able to give them clues in different ways:-

- a) by initial letter sound, 'it's a f.....'
- b) by description, 'it's made of metal'
- c) by function, 'we eat with it'
- d) by location, 'it's found in the kitchen draw'
- e) by attribute, 'it's hard'



2. Encourage them to cue themselves in by using the above methods, for example, 'what does it start with? What do you do with it?' etc.

3. A child with word-finding difficulties may take longer than expected to:-

- a) process what has just been said
- b) to formulate a response



So, remember to give them plenty of time to respond to your questions.

4. In conversation it is important that a child is successful in communicating rather than finding the precise words. Let your child know that as long as they get their message across it doesn't matter which words are used. Praise your child if they get their message across even if they say more than they need, e.g. 'you know the place where you see all the old bones and coins and stuff'. You know from this that they are trying to tell you about a museum so you could say 'Oh yes, you mean the museum'. You could check if they have remembered the word later on.

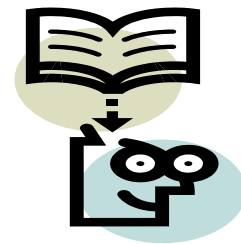
Developing vocabulary skills in the classroom

- Encourage children to listen to new words - ask them to put up their hands if they have or haven't heard the word before
- Use visual supports e.g. pictures where possible
- Talk about what the new words mean
- Talk about what sounds are in the word
- Encourage the children to say the new word several times
- Revise new vocabulary at the end of the lesson and the start of the next lesson the following week, for example use word webs and mind maps on the white board

Additional steps . . .

If you have some more time to practise the new vocabulary here are some extra activities:

- Experience the new word (eat it, touch it, feel it, listen to it etc....)
- Act it out
- Put the word in a sentence
- Make up a song about it
- Write the word down
- Build up a vocabulary book for older children



Self help strategies

- Help the child be aware of their vocabulary difficulties in a supported environment
- Encourage them to say when they do not know what a word means or they do not remember what the word is
- Use visual strategies to help their self cueing e.g.
 - Cue cards on a wall/desk
 - Note book to write in
 - Posters in the classroom
 - Word webs and mind maps

