

Supporting your child's speech, language and communication at home

Word Games for Supporting Vocabulary Development

This advice sheet provides some ideas on simple-to-play word games that you can play at home with your child to help them develop their vocabulary skills. (With acknowledgement to Anna Branagan and Stephen Parsons at www.thinkingtalking.co.uk.)

Word Rounds

Method: Choose one of the categories below. Take turns, with each player adding a word for the chosen category.

Variation: After you have chosen your category set a timer for one minute. Taking turns around the group see how many words can be generated in one minute. Record the family total and then try to beat it next time.

Animals	Clothes	Furniture	Food	Transport
Sports	Countries	Shops	Parts of the body	Computer games
Films	T.V. programmes	Famous people	Anything to do with Christmas	Books
Something you cut	Something you can smell	Something you wear when it is hot	Something you can see on a beach	Songs
Somewhere you go on holiday	Something you would see at the zoo	Things you use or wear when playing sport	Things you could do with a piece of paper	Something red/ green/ blue
Something starting with 'p' (or any other letter)	Something with legs	Something you would find in a handbag	Things in a classroom	Things you could buy in a supermarket that isn't food
Shoes	Things that are cold	Insects	Things that grow	Musical instruments
Boy's/ girl's name	Cartoon characters	Famous sports men/ women	Verbs (doing words)	Adjectives (describing words)

Things that are thin	Things that are round/ square	Breakable objects	Things that can fly	Things with wheels
Toys	Things you plug in	Emotions	Pets	Jobs
Things that make you laugh	Things that are fast	Breakfast foods	Things that are exciting/ exhilarating	Things that open
Things that are boring	Liquids /things you can pour	Things that rhyme with tea/ cat/ light.	Drinks	Things that are light (not heavy)

I-Spy

Method: Play the traditional 'I spy' game. "I spy with my little eye something beginning with ... (letter)".

Variation 1: Thinking hat. Word meaning clues are given rather than letters and the object does not need to be within sight.

- Say, "I put on my thinking hat and think of something that is (give a clue)."
- If incorrect say, "It's not that. I put on my thinking hat and think of something that is (original clue and a second clue)."
- Continue until the word has been guessed. E.g.: 'I put on my thinking hat and think of something that is spicy.'

Variation 2: Big brain. In this game players give a clue containing the first sound of the word as well as a word meaning clue. Unlike 'I spy' players do not need to be able to see the item, but they need to think with their 'big brains'. For example, "I think with my big brain, something that is part of a tree and begins with a 'b'.

What can it do?

Pick one of the words below. Can you think of five things that it can do or that can be done with it? For example, tree: climb, chop, grow, fall down and absorb carbon dioxide.

apple	baby	ball	bread	chalk
giraffe	leaf	lion	lollipop stick	paper
paperclip	pencil	penguin	rubber band	stick
tree	your foot	your hand	cat	flour
flower	hair	water	air	spoon

Alison is an acrobat in Asia

Select a letter of the alphabet. Then ask each player to generate a name, profession and place that all begin with the same letter. For example, for the letter 'a': "Alison is an acrobat in Asia", or for 'e': "Eddie is an engineer in Edinburgh."

Describe it!

Take a look at www.pobble365.com and look at the amazing images. Talk about the picture in turn. They might need some help to talk about different things. You could talk about all the things you can see, how the picture makes you feel, what might someone be thinking, what might happen next, how someone is moving, what might someone say or what sort of person they are.

Don't say it!

Cut out the words below or think of your own words. They might be related to what your child has learnt at school or any words that they are familiar with. Place all the words in a 'hat'. Each person takes a turn at taking out words from the hat. The challenge is to describe the word without using the word at all

hill	trolley	graph	desert
dinosaur	fly swat	spaceship	cornflakes
mountain	biscuit	storm	flood
tree	umbrella	bee	baby
geography	daisy	crocodile	cinema
planets	purse	moon	present
spider	earthquake	tiger	America

Word associations

One player starts by saying a word. The next player says a word that is related to the first word. It can be related in any way. If another player cannot see how the words are related, he/she can challenge and the connection needs to be explained. Keep going until a word is repeated or a connection cannot be explained.

Here's an example: Egypt – Mummy – Dad – beard – Santa Claus – Christmas – trees – leaves.

Twenty Questions

One person thinks of an object. Others try and guess what it is by asking questions. The original player can only answer yes, no or maybe. Give a clue if they are on the wrong track. Can they guess it in 20 questions?

Audiobooks

Audio books and podcasts can be used to boost exposure to the spoken word. It also enables children to access stories with more complex vocabulary than they are able to read.

How to get the most from an audiobook. Listen to the audiobooks together and show your enjoyment. Talk about what is happening. Stop once in a while and predict what might happen next. If you miss a bit, ask your child to explain. Draw pictures of what you think characters and places might look like. Discuss similarities and differences. Act out exciting parts.

How to develop your child's vocabulary. Chose a word that you heard in the audiobook. Talk about its meaning and write it somewhere. Challenge everyone on the family to use and listen out for it. At the end of the day say it a new sentence.

Here are some ways of accessing free audiobooks

David Walliams. A new story every day, read by David Walliams himself!

www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/elevenses

Borrowbox. Families can access audiobooks from libraries for free. Often you never need to even go to a library, it can all be done on-line. Download the 'Borrowbox' app to download eBooks and audiobooks. You still need your library card number and your local library needs to be signed up to the scheme.

www.borrowbox.com

SEN charities. There are charities that offer a good range of audiobooks for children with some additional need. You do not need to provide evidence of this need, just state what the difficulty is. These services charge.

www.calibre.org.uk

www.listening-books.org.uk

LibriVox. Free downloads of out of copyright books such as Heidi, Black Beauty and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. These are read by volunteers.

www.librivox.org.uk