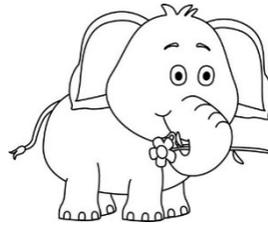


Teaching Vocabulary

When children hear an unfamiliar word, they don't just automatically know what it means and how to use the word in conversation. They first have to learn *about* the word, then they will begin to use the word in their conversations. It helps to hear the word used many times and often children will ask questions as they learn its meaning.



Having a large vocabulary is one of the essential building blocks for developing literacy skills. When a child begins to read, they not only have to be able to sound out words, they then use their vocabulary knowledge to work out what the word means.

Here's a great strategy to help teach children new words:

Shoot for the SSTaRS!!

S: Stress the new word. Use your voice to draw attention to it.

S: Show your child what the word means. Use facial expressions, gestures, a picture or act it out.

T: Tell your child what the word means. Describe the word and give specific details about it. Talk about what category the word belongs to.

and

R: Relate the word to your child's experience or something they are familiar with. This helps your child link the new word to other words they are already familiar with and expand their current knowledge.

S: Say it again

You could also try replacing common everyday words with more sophisticated words. Children tend to come across more sophisticated words in books. For example, replace *tired* with *exhausted*.

If you're concerned about your child's speech or language development, contact a speech pathologist to discuss whether assessment for your child is indicated.



Here's an example:

Elephant

Stress: oh look at the elephant!

Show: See the elephant in the book. He's eating the leaves. We can pretend to be an elephant (use your arm as a trunk!)

Tell: an elephant is an animal that lives in the jungle, but we can also see them at the zoo. Elephants are really big animals that have four legs, a tail and a long trunk.

Relate: Remember when we went to the zoo how we saw the elephants there? They were sleeping in the sun.

Say: Let's see what else the elephants are going to do in this story!

This strategy can be used with children of any age. For infants and toddlers, you'll be choosing common words that come up in everyday routines such as *bird, nose, hat, wash*.

For older kindy-aged children think about less common words. Often these are words that arise in books, in an unfamiliar situation or when you go out such as *gorilla, tiny, swamp, frustrated, telescope, chaotic, filthy*.



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