

Speech and Language Support Sheet 47

Building Vocabulary

Developing your child vocabulary is important. It helps build comprehension of new words and ideas and helps them express themselves more.

Children learn words by hearing them used regularly in conversation with adults and friends. They also learn through adult's reading to them and later by reading themselves.

Some children need lots of practice and opportunities to hear words repeated regularly before they can learn and use them.

When learning vocabulary you need to make sure your child doesn't just learn to say the word but also understands lots of things about it (a depth of knowledge).

Learning words

Learn in groups

Choose a type of word to practice learning this could be anything from verbs (doing words) animal vocabulary, clothes, food or weather words. Your speech and language therapist may have given you some ideas on types of words to work on.

Repeat Repeat Repeat

Practice and hearing the targeted words frequently is a key part of building vocabulary. Think 'teach don't test'. This means let your child hear you use the word a lot rather than asking them lots of "what's that?" questions.

When doing word learning activities use pictures or real object to help your child visualise while you are learning the words.

It is important to develop the depth of your child's knowledge about a word. When you really understand what a word means it helps you to learn, remember and recall it later. It's then also easier to try and use it in sentences

For example they may be able to find a picture of a lion but know very little about it. To really learn and understand the word 'lion' you have to also know things like it lives in Africa, it is a predator, lions hunt in packs, male lions have manes, the young are called cubs etc. all this information gives us a full picture of what a lion is.

Knowing the features and attributes of words helps us to categorise and learn the idea better.

If a word is well stored in your mind it is easier to remember when your child wants to use it.

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Learning about a word

To help your child learn more about a word talk about

- What you can do with it (function)
- Where you can find it
- What group is it in (animal/food etc.)
- What parts it has
- What does it look like – colour/shape/size

Use sorting activities and word webs to help build this knowledge

Sorting

Look at pictures and/or object and put them into groups based their features or function. You can choose various different ideas but not too many at once.

e.g.

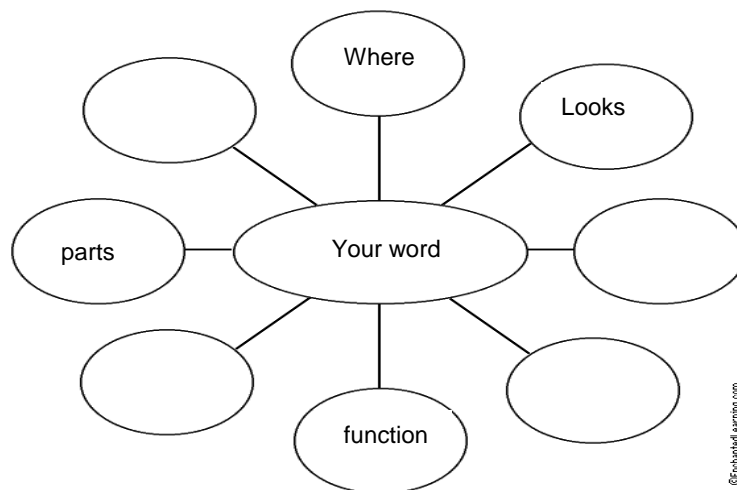
Colour			Things to eat (food)
Clothes			Animals

Talk about what makes them the same reinforcing the idea. It goes here because its yellow/we can eat it. We can eat the burger. We can eat the apple.

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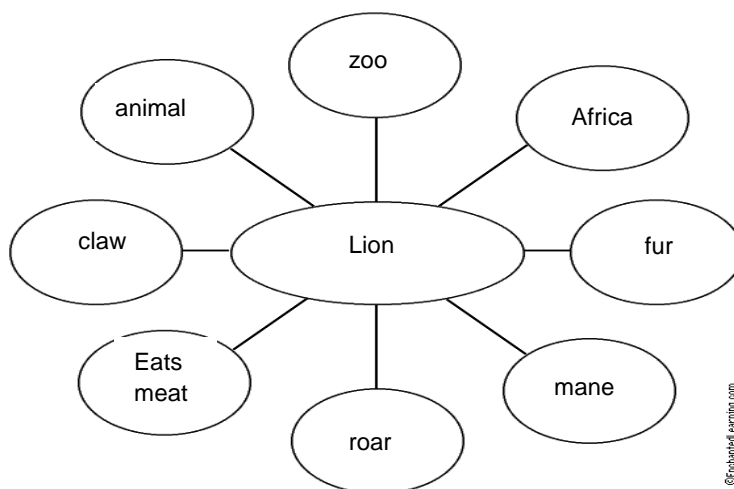
Another useful way exploring what a word means is through word webs

A word web can start simple with a few key ideas about a word e.g.



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You can build it up as you go. Use drawings and pictures to help



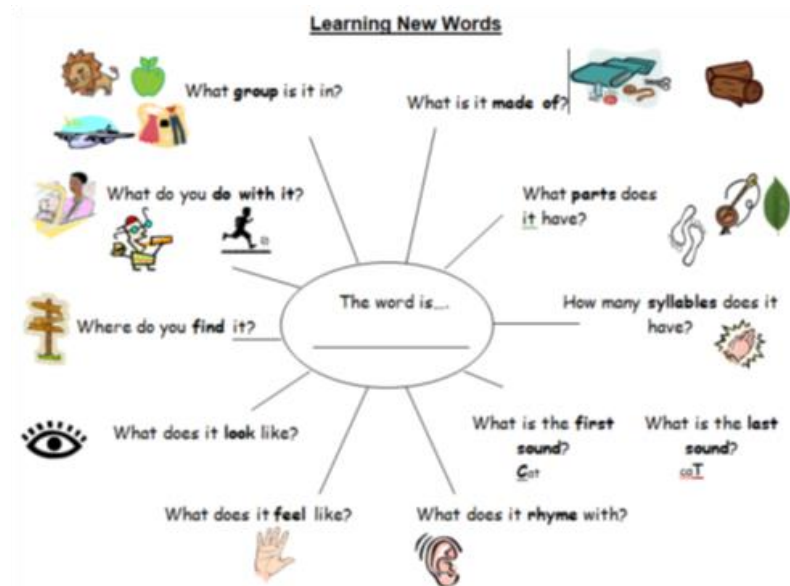
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It's also helpful to think about the sounds in a word e.g.

- How many syllables does it have?
- What is the first sound?
- What is the last sound?
- What does it rhyme with?
- Can they put the word back together if it is said in parts e.g. c-a-t- = 'cat'?

You may end up with a word web that has lots of information on both meaning and sounds in a word.



Top Tips

- Make a word wall at home
- Stick new words on the fridge.
- Use pictures with the words
- Use other visual like word webs to help
- Talk about new words as often as possible
- Keep it simple – choose a few words 5-10 and really learn those before adding more
- Play describing and guessing games e.g. think of a word then give clues for your child to guess, take turns at this. You may have to ask some questions to help your child describe at first.

Regular practice and discussion of the words will help ideas and vocabulary to become firmly stored and be more readily accessible for your child

Remember you can ask your speech and language therapist to demonstrate these ideas and ask questions to help you put these ideas in place at home.

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