How to help your child learn words

Things to remember

1 Words are important.
2 Home support for vocabulary makes a difference.
3 Have fun with words.
4 It is about talking as much as reading and writing.
5 When talking about words, use comments rather than ask questions.
6 Do a little every day.

Everyday things you can do to support vocabulary

You do not need expensive toys or gadgets to develop your child's vocabulary. You are the best word-learning toy there is!

Reading and talking

Books are an excellent source of interesting vocabulary. Reading to your child from an early age, and continuing to support their reading, is an effective way in which you can support vocabulary development.

Build on this by talking about word meanings.

- Are there any words that are new to your child?
- Are there any interesting words that your child likes?
- Are there good describing or action words?

Find words that sound funny. Find words that mean … By building this into your reading routine, you are developing your child's vocabulary.

New words from school

The words your child is learning about at school will be displayed somewhere so that you can see them. This might be on the window, door or board as you come in. Ask a staff member if you cannot see them. As your child is still just learning these words, it is best if you use the word in sentences and talk about them, rather than ask 'What does that mean?' If you want your child to use a word in a sentence, he or she must hear the word in sentences many times.

Listen, praise and add an extra word

Listen carefully to the words your child is using and look for opportunities to praise and add words. When he or she uses a new word, let them know by commenting on their word choice: 'What a great word!' If your child plays it safe and uses the same words repeatedly, give them alternatives. For instance: if the child says, 'I made a **big** tower', the parent says, 'Let me see your tower. It is **big** and it is **tall**.'

Learn a few simple word games

There might be times in the day when you do not have anything to play with, eg on journeys or when waiting. Use this 'dead time' to play word games. They will keep little minds occupied as well as being fun.

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