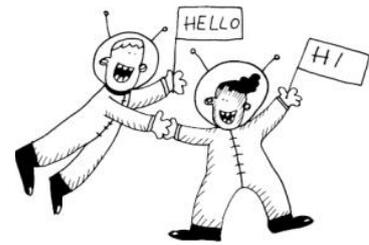


## Having fun with words

Parents are important to vocabulary development. It is the interaction that children have with their parents that forms the foundation for later language learning. As well as promoting early development parents have a crucial role to play in the ongoing support of vocabulary.



Here are some games that you can play with when there is a spare five minutes. They need very little equipment and preparation. The words used in this section do not need to be topic based or text related. The idea is to explore, play and have fun.

Play the games in your home language, giving children to develop vocabulary in both home and school languages.

### Key principles to convey to parents

1. Have fun with words. Try something different or another time if your child is not interested, but do keep trying.
2. It is about talking as much as reading and writing
3. When talking about words use comments more than questions.

### General ideas

#### Reading

Reading to children from an early age and continuing to support children's reading is the most effective way that parents can support vocabulary development. Exposure to a rich and varied vocabulary is essential.

#### Reading and talking

When school staff send books home they can select a couple of really useful words and write them on a sticker in the back of the book. Write an instruction like this: 'find these words in the book. Read the sentence each is in. Can you work out what each means? Talk about what each means with an adult.' Parents are then encouraged to talk about vocabulary as part of the reading routine.

#### Watching TV

Set your child a task when they watch TV. Can he or she come and tell you a word that they have heard? Can they tell you a word that they think you might not know? Describe a character from the show. Compare two characters they have been watching. All of this involves vocabulary!

## Games to Play with your Child

### **I went shopping**

This game sometimes called 'I went shopping' and is good for developing memory, so is good for adults too. One person starts by saying 'I went shopping and I bought a ...' (names a food item). The second player says 'I went shopping and I bought ...' and repeats the first player's item before adding their own. The third player continues saying the first two items before adding their own. And so on. See how many you can remember. Variations of this game are: 'I went on holiday and I packed ....'

### **Word walk**

As you walk to and from school or at other times look out for items in a category such as 'plants' or can be describe by a particular word such as 'rusty.' Teachers may be able to provide you with more words for this.

### **I spy**

The traditional 'I spy' game. 'I spy something with my little eye and it starts with a ...(letter)' or give it a twist by using categories or descriptive words like this: 'something coloured red / blue ...' or 'something round / spiky/ shiny / outside / inside that is ...' 'something that is big / beautiful / perfumed / growing / hot / noisy' ...

### **Category call out**

On the bus or in the car, think of a category. You can choose any topic but here are some ideas for inspiration: 'living things, things with wheels, things with circles or things made of metal.' Work as a team to see how many things you can see in a set time that belong in the category. A minute might be enough.

### **Touch, taste and smell**

Talk about sensory experiences as they arise. When you smell something (good or bad) talk about words you can use to describe it. When you touch interesting things, can your child think of a word that describes how it feels? If they use words like 'good' or 'nice' challenge them to think of a more precise word, such as 'rough' or 'soothing'.

### **20 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?

### **Treasure hunt**

When outside go looking for things such as:

- objects that could be described by a particular adjective (e.g. grotesque)
- categories such as mini-beasts
- particular plants or insects such as ladybirds

Talk about them, draw, write or take photographs of them.

### **Alphabet game**

One for the bus or car. Start with calling out 'a'. Everyone then tries to spot something that starts with an 'a.' when someone has called out an item starting with 'a' you can move on to 'b' and so on through the alphabet.

### **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 they 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

### **What can it do?**

This is another game for journeys: one player calls out an object that they can see and the next person has to think of 5 things that it can do / be done with it. For instance: 'tree' climb, chop, grow, fall down and absorb carbon dioxide.

### **Big brain**

Big brain is a variation on 'I spy' but rather than seeing something you need to think of an object and the letter it starts with. Great for playing when you are waiting somewhere. 'I think with my big brain something that is cold starts with an 'l''. 'Is it ice?' 'No.' Can you guess what it is?