

Afasic CYMRU

voice for life
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Charity No. 1045617

Helping your school age child to
understand & use words



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LOTTERY FUNDED

The store of words that you know, understand and use is called your vocabulary.

Supporting your child to build the number and range of words that he/she knows and uses helps with:

- ✓ understanding
- ✓ talking
- ✓ joining in conversations
- ✓ developing thinking and learning

Young children typically learn words through listening and talking. They hear the words around them and practise using them by speaking.

Both spoken and written words are important. Children who have a large vocabulary understand more of what they hear and read.

Older children are typically expected to learn more and more words *through* reading and writing. However, although reading can support vocabulary development, older children continue to need support with learning words through talking, particularly with words that are more abstract e.g. through, every, before, each, few.

If you are concerned about your child's talking, seek advice from a qualified speech and language therapist.

Read this leaflet for general ideas of how you can help your child build vocabulary skills.

Learning new words

When a child learns a new word, they store information about **the sounds in the word**, **the meaning of the word** and **how to use the word** when speaking. Knowing this, can help us to help children learn words more effectively.

Each word that is learnt is gradually connected into a network with other words. These connections between words are very important and include making connections between spoken and written words.

Some children find it difficult to 'find' the word they intend to say. It's important to allow more time in a conversation when your child experiences this. When adults experience this, we say it's as if a word is on the tip of our tongue!

Help your child to understand and use words

Please adapt suggestions to take account of your child's age and stage of development.

Exploring and finding out about new words is a good way of supporting your child's talking and learning at home.

Notice new words when you are listening, reading, having conversations and watching a film or TV programme. Talk about the new word and find out what it means. Books are a good source of new words, both fiction and non-fiction. Find out what words are associated with the class topic in school.

Talk about the sounds in a word.

What sound does the word begin with? How many syllables or claps does it have? What does it rhyme with? This will help your child to say the word and later on to spell and write it. E.g.: "few" Begins with "ff" sound, it has 1 syllable. It rhymes with 'chew'.



Think about a child friendly way of explaining or showing what a word means. Relate words to real life or 'hands on' practical experiences. A craft/cooking activity can help your child to remember what a word means and how to use it. E.g.: "Few" is a word that tells us a small number but more than one. We need a ***few*** mushrooms for the pizza topping'.

Relate a new word to words that your child already knows. You can enrich the connections between words by linking written words with spoken words and ideas that your child already knows. For example: "Pettrified means very scared".

Have fun with words!

Draw the meaning! Act out a word! Find an image online. Make a word map. Choose a word of the week!

Play a game such as guessing a word from clues:

- a) I spy: use describing clues e.g.: 'I spy with my little eye something with a ***few*** apples in it.
- b) Make a crossword and devise your own clues for school topic words!
www.puzzlemaker.com

Encourage your child to spot words that they've heard before but are not sure about. Praise your child for asking or checking what a word means. Let them know its ok to ask or say 'I don't understand'. Also, show your child how to use clues and word-parts to help work out the meaning of a word e.g.: 'less' on the end of a word changes it to mean the opposite.... harmless, rest***less***, care***less***.

Talk with your child about what to do when he/she finds a new word. Let your child know it's ok to ask an adult or a friend. Show an older child how to use a dictionary, thesaurus and/or an online resource like www.vidtionary.com

Come back to words that you've already covered. Repetition and review is an important part of learning and remembering new words.

