

Top tips for introducing new vocabulary to children

Children typically say their first word by the age of 12 months and by 18 months may use about 20 words. By three years old they may know approximately 300 words, acquiring about 2500 words by the age of five. A child's vocabulary when they are five years old (that is the number of words they know and can use) can predict how well they will do at school aged 11. Therefore, teaching children new vocabulary is a vital building block for their development. These top tips will support children to learn new vocabulary and use their new words in sentences.

- Encourage parents to keep a word diary in partnership with you. In this way, you can celebrate important milestones in a child's vocabulary development
- Support children's understanding of new words by saying the new word alongside a real object or an action, rather than with a picture
- Introduce categories of objects e.g. exploring together a basket of different brushes (toothbrush, hairbrush, pastry brush, nail brush etc)
- Provide lots of opportunities for children to repeat their new word in different contexts e.g. 'brush the crumbs up after snack', 'hairbrush for dolly', 'brush your teeth' etc. You can check older children's understanding by asking them "What do you use this for?"
- Provide a running commentary alongside children's play, using the new word and extending their vocabulary and understanding by adding more words e.g. soft brush, long handled brush
- Have a slot in your staff meetings to brainstorm and plan which vocabulary you are going to focus on each week. Plan to include nouns (brush, soap), verbs (brushing, scrubbing), and adjectives (soft, soapy)
- If you have concerns that a child is not understanding or progressing in their language skills, consult with your SEND/ALN/ASN lead as well as the child's parents/carers about next steps
- Share successful strategies and approaches with other colleagues. Having a focus on language as a weekly slot in your staff meeting will enable you to share ideas and improve practice as you support children with this key skill.



NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Child Development 1: Speech and Language Skills](#)

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna