

A Parent's Guide for Increasing Your Child's Vocabulary

Why do I need to work on my child's vocabulary?

- Many children with language disorders understand and use fewer words as compared to other children their age (i.e., they have a limited vocabulary).
- A good vocabulary is needed to be able to communicate needs and ideas.
- Therefore, improving vocabulary is an important language goal.

Some thoughts about teaching your child new words:

- New words are learned best when the object is present or when the word is of use or fun to your child.
- Be sure to teach your child lots of different types of words [e.g., action words (i.e., verbs), descriptive words (i.e., adjectives and adverbs), and location words (i.e., prepositions), etc.], as well as the names of objects.
- A new word should be introduced on its own or in a simple sentence.
- Emphasize the new word by saying it a little louder and a little slower than the other words.
- Children tend to learn words in a particular pattern:
 - General terms are learned before specific items ("big" versus "gigantic" or "huge").
 - Concrete terms are learned before more abstract terms ("ball" versus "blue").
 - Names of things they can touch are learned before those of things they cannot ("cookie" versus "soft").
- Children must understand the concept before a new word can have meaning
 - A child must understand the concept of "colour" before he can be expected to learn the colour label "blue".
 - You can check for understanding by asking him to find the blue car when you ask for it.
 - Once he can do this, he will eventually be able to start saying "blue."
- What children understand a word to mean may be different from the adult's understanding. This understanding will get better over time, with more experience.

Reference: "Developing Vocabulary" – Handout – no source.