

Games and Strategies for Developing Vocabulary



1. Vocabulary Book

Write down and draw a picture of new words so the child can refer back to it.

2. Generating in a Category

Give a category name for the child to list items

e.g. 'All the fruits/ weather words/ red things etc you can think of'

You could give a target amount to think of e.g. 5 things. Give examples if necessary.

3. A → Z

Put up an A → Z letter list and think of items in a given category for each letter

e.g. ANIMALS: Ant, Bear, Camel.....

4. Functions

- i. Go through the uses and functions of items using the idea in 2. e.g. 'All the things we can use for cutting' / 'All the things that give light'....
- ii. Guess from a clue e.g. 'It's something you sit on...' - you can use pictures to think of an item.
- iii. Take an object or a picture and name all the actions you that can be carried out with it e.g. ball: you can throw it, bounce it, roll it, kick it etc.

5. Close procedures

- i. Give a sentence or tell a story with gaps to fill in e.g. 'I dry my hands with a....'
- ii. Rhymes: the child has to finish off a sentence e.g. 'I can bake a cake'

6. Classification

- i. Give a list to classify e.g. carrots, potatoes, beans and mushrooms are all kinds of....? July, September, May and March are all.....?
- ii. Sorting a pile of pictures/ objects into category groups.
The teacher can also ask for specific sorting e.g. 'Group all the living vs. non-living things'
- iii. The teacher reads out a list of rhyming words e.g. bat, hat, mat, rat...each child has to listen out for words in a particular category e.g. an animal, clothing
These can be linked to class topics

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7. Descriptions

- i. Choose an object in the room to describe and the others to guess
- ii. Choose a letter. The child thinks of an item with that initial sound and gives clues using single key words e.g. B: 'bear' → 'animal, hairy, claws'. Doing this in teams adds interest.
- iii. Place a collection of objects in a bag behind a screen. The child takes an item and gives clues to the others. This can be done with picture cards.
- iv. An object is passed around the circle with each child describing a key aspect.
- v. Take a picture, throw a dice and give that number of pieces of information about the item.
- vi. Illustrations: useful for describing a non-present idea/object. The teacher draws the item as the child describes it with help of questions for specific details.
- vii. Description Maps: a written framework of key aspects enables the child to produce a spoken or written description e.g.

Colour People

Materials Size

Location PLACE

Function Shape

Posters with picture symbols can also be used on a board or a wall

8. Twenty Questions

Make this easier by deciding on a category and by reducing the number of yes/ no questions (to help memory). The teacher can draw or write information and also use symbols to trigger key questions e.g. to ask about size/ use/ location etc.

9. Odd-One-Out

- i. You can use pictures or spoken / written words
You can use ideas for – category e.g. duck, frog, parrot, eagle
- function e.g. pencil, felt-tip, crayon, ruler
- ii. Similarities and differences can also be highlighted by asking a child to compare or contrast two items.

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10. Word Associations

A child is given a word and says an associated word- the others explain what the link is.

11. Shopping List

Each child in the circle starts with 'I went shopping and I bought...' adding an item to the growing list. At the end of the game you can discuss useful strategies of how to remember the list.

12. Barrier Games

Two players face across a table with a screen in between. They have identical sets of coloured bricks/ shapes. Player 1 assembles a pattern, which s/he then instructs Player 2 to build. Player 2 is allowed to ask questions. The screen is removed and the two patterns are compared. Reasons for errors are discussed.

The activity is useful for teaching place, colour and shape words.

13. Forgetful Teacher

One adult names a picture correctly and another adult incorrectly. The pupil has to indicate who is correct. This can be varied according to the child's level and needs.

14. They Belong Together

- i. Put out a collection of objects. Each child chooses 2 things according to their own criteria. The other pupils discuss and try to guess why the items were paired.
- ii. Concept snap: deal out picture cards. Say snap if you can think of 2 things that are the same about the items

15. Silly or Sensible

Develop topic-linked cue cards each with a sentence on it- some silly, some sensible e.g. 'A car can grow' or 'A tree has a trunk'. The child indicates if his card is silly or sensible. This can be discussed in a group. The player could have a reward e.g. a turn in a board game.

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16. Describing Action

As a group brainstorm lists of action words associated with people, animals or objects. Introduce interesting vocabulary and encourage the children to use the words during role-play.

e.g. Watch you pet. What things does he do? Can you copy him?

Cat

Stalking
Stretching
Yawning
Creeping

Budgie

flapping
pecking
squawking
leaning

Mouse

nibbling
scratching
scampering
peeping

17. Attribute Matching

List items and matching attributes onto separate cards. With partners match items with correct descriptive terms:

- a) desert humid
beach dense
mountain dry
swamp treacherous
forest sandy

- b) as gentle as a mouse
as brave as an ox
as strong as a lamb
as quiet as a mule
as wise as a lion
as stubborn as an owl

18. Group Brainstorm

List attribute words- these could include less common words. Organise groups who discuss a given word- its meaning and what it could refer to. Share and discuss the ideas generated by different groups. This could be linked to a class topic or curricular subject.

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