

Section 2.8

Using those important 'first words'

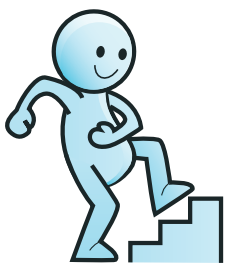


Why is this important?

Children first use single words to name or request items in their environment. By increasing vocabulary through games and activities, children will be able to use the words learnt for a variety of different things – ask, comment, draw attention to, indicate something has gone, etc. The function that these words have is very important. For example, the word 'car' can be used in a number of different ways to signal different meanings according to the context and the intonation used.

What to do

- Put everyday items in a bag or a pillowcase and encourage the child to pull out one item at a time and name it.
- Hide photos/pictures/toys around the room: encourage the child to find and name them.
- Find or make a cube-shaped box. Stick photos or pictures from a catalogue on each of the sides. Let the child throw the cube and name the picture that lands face-up.
- Share books, naming pictures together.
- Play with an inset puzzle: keeping the remaining pieces to one side, offer a choice of two for which to put in next. Encourage the child to name (e.g. 'ball') before passing over the piece.
- As you put the shopping away together, encourage the child to name the items as they are taken out of the bag and put away.
- *Any* and *all* everyday routines (shopping, laundry, meals, bath-time, dressing) provide opportunities to name things over and over again, providing the best possible opportunity for the child to join in and ultimately to name things spontaneously.
- Give the child a phrase to complete. Playing 'Ready, Steady, Go' can help a child to say 'go'. Make sure the game is fun and he/she wants to play with the toy. Say 'Ready, steady ...' but then wait to give the child time to say 'go'. If he/she doesn't after a long pause, say 'go' for the child and release the toy. Try again on the next turn.



Step up

- Place toys/food slightly out-of-reach so the child has to ‘ask’ for them. This may be done by pointing initially. Give a choice to encourage a verbal request (e.g. ‘Do you want the teddy or drink?’).
- As the child names something, you *add* another word. This could be a description perhaps, or a comment, e.g.
 - ★ Child: ‘Cup’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘Yes, cup/Dolly’s cup/Blue cup’.
 - ★ Child: ‘Apple’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘More apple/Apple gone’.

Step down

- Keep activities short.
- Maximise the opportunities offered by daily routines.
- Use the names of familiar items at every opportunity (e.g. body parts at bath-time, clothes as you dress, shopping as you move around the supermarket). Use them over and over again, encouraging the child to copy again and again.
- Offer choices: ‘Is it a cat or a dog?’
- Play ‘Ready, Steady, Go!’ and use a high-interest ball or vehicle to release on the word ‘go’. Hand-on-hand prompts can also help to time the release with the word as accurately as possible.
- Name the same five objects (out of the bag) every day.
- Start the game off by saying ‘It’s a ...’

