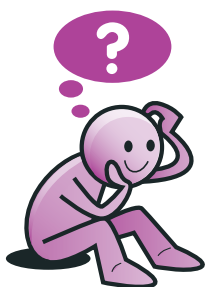


Section 3.7

Using one word to describe an action

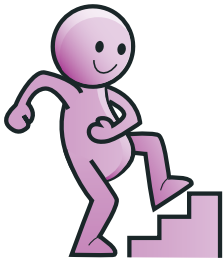


Why is this important?

Action words (verbs) describe what is happening/what someone or thing is doing. They are more abstract than object names (i.e. they can't be seen) and therefore can be trickier to learn. Describing what someone else is doing is a further step along this road.

What to do

- During movement or physical play, talk about what the child is doing. Ask the child if he/she can copy, e.g.
 - ★ 'Mummy's *jumping*. Can Amy *jump*?'
 - ★ 'That boy's *climbing*. Can Jalil *climb*?'
- As the child begins to understand the action words, ask: 'What is Amy doing?'
- Sing nursery rhymes that include actions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush' (e.g. 'this is the way we clap our hands, stamp our feet, jump up and down').
 - ★ 'The Wheels on the Bus' (e.g. 'the people/children on the bus, they wave bye-bye, nod their head, eat their lunch').
 - ★ 'If You're Happy and You Know It ...'
- Encourage the child to join in with the actions: sometimes pause and ask, e.g.
 - ★ 'What did we do with our hands?' – 'clap'.
- Play 'Simon Says'. Ask the child to follow instructions to:
 - ★ Jump, walk, run, sleep, clap, fall down, etc.
- At first, do the actions together and then let the child try by him/herself. Get doll or teddy to play along too. Reverse the roles so the child has to tell others what to do – you could use picture cards for this so one child, in turn, tells the others to do the action on the card.
- Look at picture books together, talking about what people are doing. Ask, e.g.
 - ★ 'Find someone who's *running*.'
- Take it in turns to find someone and say what is happening. If the child is unsure of the right word, offer a choice 'Is he *running* or *sleeping*?'
- During play, *you* describe what is happening and/or ask the child what he/she's doing, e.g.
 - ★ In the home corner – brushing teeth/hair, eating, sleeping, sitting, cooking, tidying, cleaning.
 - ★ During ball play – the child can roll, bounce, throw and catch.
 - ★ Playing with cars – the child can push, crash, pull and stop.
 - ★ Craft play – cutting, painting, cooking, drawing, colouring, etc.



Step up

- Try bridging by using two words together to describe an action: when the child uses an action word, try adding *another* word either before or after the action word – this will add to the vocabulary store but also provide an excellent opportunity for expanding language (e.g. child says ‘eat’, adult says ‘yes eating apple’ or ‘girl eating’).
- Gather pictures of a boy and girl doing similar things (e.g. running). Can the child use two words to describe these pictures (e.g. ‘girl running’, ‘boy running’)?
- Introduce more difficult or less familiar action words (e.g. flying, writing, mopping).
- Look for action words in a picture of many items or much activity.

Step down

- Support understanding by using gestures/signs alongside the word.
- Demonstrate action words and encourage the child to copy (e.g. if you are looking at a picture book and see a picture of a boy climbing, encourage the child to copy the action by climbing the stairs or up a slide. Practise with doll and teddy too. This helps the child experience the actions).
- If using the right word is difficult, try giving a choice (e.g. picture of child digging in the sand, ask ‘Is the boy cutting or digging?’).
- Model the right answer (e.g. picture of digging in the sand):
 - ★ Adult: ‘What’s this boy doing?’
 - ★ Child: ‘Sand’.
 - ★ Adult: ‘Yes he’s *digging* (in the) sand! *What’s* he doing?’
 - ★ Child: ‘Digging sand’.

