

Section 4.10

Learning to use 'big' and 'little'

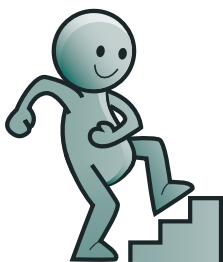


Why is this important?

'Big' and 'little' are important opposites. They form the building blocks of more abstract concept development and give children a means to describe the world around them. They are often amongst the earliest adjectives (describing words) that children learn. Usually 'big' is learned before 'little'.

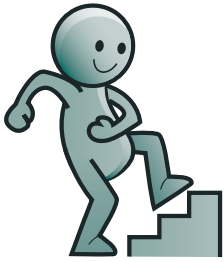
What to do

- Gather together:
 - ★ A selection of objects – one 'big' and one 'little' (e.g. 'big' cup and 'little' cup; 'big' pencil and 'little' pencil).
- Explain that you are going to take it in turns to tidy up and put the things away into a box/bag.
- Put out a pair of items (e.g. two cups, one 'big' and one 'little'). Tell the child to find the 'big cup'. Put it in the box.
- Ask the child:
 - ★ Adult: 'What did you put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: 'Big (cup)'.
- Point to the remaining cup:
 - ★ Adult: 'What shall I put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: 'Little (cup)'.
- During outdoor play, ask the child to jump into a 'big'/'little' hoop. 'Step up' by asking: 'Which hoop are you in?'
- There are numerous opportunities throughout the day for teaching 'big' and 'little' – laying the table ('big' spoon, 'little' spoon), matching shoes etc.



Step up

- Increase the selection of 'big'/'little' items so the child has to use a two-word phrase (e.g. 'big'/'little' + object name).
- Use 'bye-bye' or 'gone' as you post the item:
 - ★ 'Bye-bye big cup.'
 - ★ 'Big cup gone.'
- Use pictures as well as real objects.
- Encourage the use of 'big'/'little' items + where it's going (e.g. 'big cup in the box').



- Ask: 'Where's the *big* cup?'
 - ★ Child: 'In (the) box.'
 - ★ Adult: 'Yes, *big* cup is in the box.'
- Have a tea party with a 'big'/'little' doll/teddy or use 'big'/'little' plates. Take turns to give instructions relating to 'who' the food is given to or on what size plate.
- Draw and colour 'big' and 'little' things. Can the child tell you what he/she is colouring?
- Extend the ideas into other play or daily routines (e.g. as you fill the 'big' jug with water or use the 'little' bucket to make a little sandcastle, etc.).
- Look at picture books and find things that are 'big' and things that are 'little'.

Step down

- Use signs/gestures for 'big' and 'little'.
- Offer choices (e.g. 'Is it a *big* cup or a *little* cup?').
- Although you can use both items, begin by asking only for the 'big' one until the child is managing this consistently.
- Model the sentence:
 - ★ Adult: 'What did *you* put in the box?'
 - ★ Child: No response.
 - ★ Adult: '*Little* cup. What did you put in?'
 - ★ Child: 'Little (cup).'

