

Section 6.7

Understanding and using verbs in the past tense

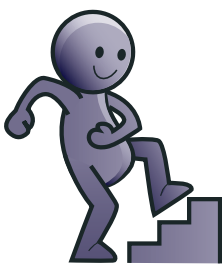


Why is this important?

Developing the grammatical structures relating to past tense allows children to talk about an event that has happened in the past and contrast this with the here and now. This increases the range of language use and also allows children to talk about things outside the here and now.

What to do

- To elicit past tense, try:
 - ★ After playtime/lunchtime, ask the child who he/she played with and what he/she ate, etc.
 - ★ When playing with toys (e.g. in home corner or with the farm), ask what food the child made for dinner or what the farmer fed the cows, etc.
 - ★ Tell a simple story (e.g. Oxford Reading Tree* Stage 1 and 2) and ask the child to use the pictures to retell the story using the past tense.
- ★ Play 'Simon Says'. When the child has performed the action, ask:
 - Adult: 'What did you do?'
 - Child: 'Jumped/danced/hopped', etc.
- ★ Use everyday situations to elicit past tense forms (e.g. a train goes past, a child falls over). Ask 'What happened?'

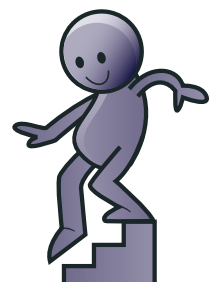


Step up

- Leave a longer gap between an event and asking what happened – this makes the task harder as the child has to concentrate on memory, vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to relay the information.
 - ★ This could be an event from earlier in the day, last week or a memorable occasion like a birthday or a holiday.
- Introduce irregular past tense verbs (e.g. caught, bought, gave) and use these often in everyday routines/while sharing books.

Step down

- Use pictures of what the child has been doing to act as visual prompts – this allows the child to concentrate on the past tense rather than what to say.
- Take photographs and use these for discussion.
- Model and repeat the correct grammatical forms for the child to hear.
- Try to use regular past tense forms (e.g. jumped, painted, clapped).



*The Oxford Reading Tree is available from Oxford University Press (www.oup.com).