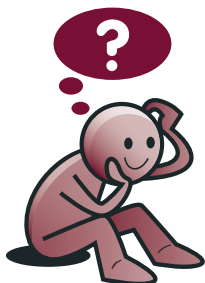


Section 8.10

Using superlatives: 'biggest' and 'tallest'



Why is this important?

The superlative is the form of the adjective or adverb that expresses 'most'. The superlative indicates that something has some feature to a 'greater' or 'lesser' degree than anything it is being compared with in a given context (e.g. if shown trains of three different lengths – one will be the longest and one will be the shortest). The grammatical marker 'est' is used most commonly.

What to do

- Gather together groups of objects (e.g. toys which vary in size). You will need at least three of each object – one small, one medium and one large, e.g.
 - ★ Small, medium and large cups
 - ★ Small, medium and large pencils
 - ★ Small, medium and large dolls
- Put out a set of three items (e.g. the three cups).
- Point to each corresponding cup in turn, saying:
 - ★ 'This cup is small, this cup is big and this cup is the...'
- Can the child fill in the gap and say 'biggest' when you pause?
- Now starting with the biggest cup say:
 - ★ 'This cup is big, this cup is smaller and this cup is the ...'
- Continue with the other sets of items – the pencils can be 'short'/'long', the dolls can be 'short'/'tall', etc.



Step up

- Increase the variety of adjectives to describe things (e.g. 'widest', 'thinnest', 'fastest', 'highest').
- Include superlative forms of concepts which will crop up in the curriculum.

Step down

- Start by asking the child to point to the biggest object – emphasising the 'est' syllable.
- As you share books and when out-and-about, talk about the 'tallest' tree in the park, the 'smallest' car at the traffic lights, the 'longest' bus in the bus station, etc.
- Introduce one superlative at a time and use it as often as you can.

