

Other things to try: 8c

Understanding and using concepts



Why is this important?

Concepts are many and varied and are an essential tool in a child's 'language box'. They are used to describe things – colour, shape, size, texture or time (e.g. 'first', 'last', 'before') and form the foundation for many aspects of the curriculum later on.

What to do

- Make a list of concepts coming up in various curriculum areas. This may include concepts that the child hasn't yet mastered or may relate to topics that are to be introduced in class.
- If the topic is 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', the child will need to know the concepts 'hard' and 'soft' which relate to the beds and chairs (e.g. this bed is too 'hard'; this bed is too 'soft').
- Walk around at school or at home and talk about different objects that are 'hard' (e.g. cup, table, pen) and 'soft' (e.g. teddy, towel, curtains). Encourage the child to feel the objects – 'hard' objects tend to feel cold whereas 'soft' objects are often warmer.
- Write down the names of things and take photos/find pictures of similar objects in magazines, etc.
- Use a scrapbook/exercise book and using two pages, write one concept in the middle of each page. Use the photos/cut-out pictures or draw pictures of the objects, stick them around the concept talking about them and generating more ideas.
- Link the concept into the topic, reading the relevant part of the story.



Step up

- Talk about items not present (which draw upon the child's experience and knowledge of the world) and discuss the kinds of describing words which might be used (e.g. a spoon or a fork are made of metal and might be cold or heavy).
- Discuss the properties of objects and how they can be related together (e.g. things made of plastic).

Step down

- Start by introducing one concept at a time and talking about things that are (e.g. 'hard' vs. 'not hard').
- Match items according to the key property.
- Match pictures of items.

