

# Why is vocabulary important?



There is strong evidence coming out in the research that the size of a child's vocabulary in their kindy years is predictive of their ability to learn to read and is directly related to their overall school achievement.

Vocabulary is not just about knowing the names of items. It also includes knowing how words are related and their characteristics. For example things like size, colour, their function, how it feels, where it's found, and what group it belongs to. For example a cow is not just an animal that goes *mooo....* it also eats grass, lives on a farm, is bigger than a mouse but not as big as an elephant, and it doesn't fly or swim very well.

Children learn new words through interactions with people around them, by listening to different conversations and through reading books. So everyday there are lots of opportunities for children to learn new words!

Here are some ideas to keep in mind when helping your child learn new words:

- Follow your child's lead by talking about what interests them during everyday activities and routines.
- Repeat words on multiple different occasions so your child has opportunities to hear and learn new words.
- Don't bombard your child with words. Give them opportunities to respond in their own way.
- Help your child learn new words by relating it to their personal experiences.
- Use actions, gestures and facial expressions to help your child understand new words.

If you're concerned about your child's language development, contact a speech pathologist to discuss whether assessment for your child would be useful.

## How can I help?

### For younger children:

- Expand on what your child says by adding words (eg. when your child says "*apple*", you could say "*do you want to eat the apple?*" *It's crunchy*).
- Use action and describing words, not just names of items.
- Talk about what you are doing in everyday activities eg. bath time, getting dressed, shopping

### For older children:

- Play "*I Spy...*" but describe the object rather than give a letter.
- Create a "feely bag" by putting random household objects in a pillowcase. Take turns to describe what you can feel and another person has to guess what it is.
- Talk about how things go together eg. *knife and fork go together because they are both cutlery*
- Talk about the functions of objects and where they are found eg. *scissors are for cutting, we read books, we sit on a chair*
- Cut out pictures from junk mail. Group them into different categories eg. *food, clothes, toys, things you like/don't like*



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