

10 tips to help your child build vocabulary through new words

Learning new words helps children read more complex books and stories. Children learn new words when someone reads to them and they read on their own. The more children read, the more words they are likely to know.

vo · cab · u · lary:
all the words known and used
by a person

Here are some things you can do with your children to help build their vocabulary.

1. **Point out words that appear often.** As you read together, point out words that you see often. These words include “I”, “me”, “a”, “the”, “but”, “my”, “he” and “she”. Your children will begin to notice the same words in every story.
2. **Play rhyming games.** As your children begin to recognize certain words, you can try playing rhyming games. These games will build their vocabulary and increase their awareness of different word sounds. As they get older, have them write out rhyming words (cat, mat, sat, splat, flat, etc.)
3. **Make sound effects.** Use different voices and sounds to keep your children interested in the story’s words. If a word sounds like its meaning, e.g., splash or splat, point this out – it makes the word more interesting. Hearing different sounds also helps your children develop better listening skills.
4. **Make connections.** Help your children connect the words you read with the words they hear. Follow along with your finger as you read to show how print moves from left to right. Point out the pictures in the book and talk about what you see, matching the words to the pictures.
5. **Talk about daily events.** Talk with your children about past and future events, using the special words that go with these activities. For example, making breakfast could be associated with words like omelet, spatula, bowl, cereal or toaster. Taking a holiday would mean using words like ticket, schedule, suitcase and so on. Every once in a while, use a new or more difficult word and talk about its meaning.
6. **List new words.** Encourage your children to keep a list of the new words they have learned. Ask them to listen for new words as people talk. Have your children find new words in newspapers, books, flyers, and magazines. Talk about the meanings of these new words with your children as they add them to their list.
7. **Look for “word families”.** Give your children a word that is found inside other words (for example, *grow* is found in *growing* and *growth*). Ask your children to name other words that are related. Explain that these words are part of the same “word family”.
8. **Build sentences.** After talking about a new word and its meaning, ask your children to write their own sentences using the word.
9. **Look up words.** As your children start to understand written words, get a children’s dictionary. Whenever they need to know the meaning of a new word, they can look it up in the dictionary and talk to you about it. You may not know the word either and you can learn together!
10. **Listen to music.** Songs introduce new words, especially ones that rhyme or repeat, which makes them easy to learn and remember. Music helps with learning languages and developing listening skills.