



Learning New Words

Your child was born to learn! From birth, your child hears words. As she grows, she starts using words to communicate. Your child will learn new words everyday. When your child learns and uses new words, she is building her VOCABULARY.

You are your child's first and best teacher. Building your child's vocabulary is VERY important. Knowing and using a lot of words will help your child with reading and writing. Every day moments are learning moments! Try these activities with your child:

YOUR INFANT:

- Talk to your baby all day long! During bath time, diapering, and dressing talk to your child. Label what you are doing. Name her clothing and toys. Talk about what you are doing when you wash her hair. For example, "Let's wash your tummy with water and soap. Water is wet!"
- Name the things that your baby touches and sees often. She will begin to understand that a certain word is for each of the objects.
- Ask your older infant to point to people and things that he knows. "Where is Mommy? Can you point to Mommy? Where's your nose? Can you point to your nose?" At first, help your child point. Smile and clap when he does it.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Ask your toddler to bring things to you: "Where is your ball?" "Can you find your shoe?" Praise her when she does. "You put away your toy! Good for you!"
- Encourage your toddler to ask for things she wants by name, such as a *cup* or *milk*, rather than just pointing or crying. Say the word and ask her to say it. For example, say: "Do you want a drink? Can you say 'milk'?" If she does not say the word, after a moment, give her the milk, and help her. State: "Say, milk, please Mommy." Your toddler will learn to use new words when you encourage her.
- Toddlers point to things and ask, "What's that?" often. Be sure to answer your child. Tell him the words for things every time he asks. Even if you think he knows the answer to "What's that?," answer his question. Use sentences: "That's a red car. It's driving fast. Do you like cars?"

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- When you read to your child, pay special attention to new words. Tell what they mean. Ask her what she thinks they mean. Use a new word from a book at a later time. "That cat is *striped*, just like the *striped* tiger in our book."
- When you hear your child use a new word, praise her. "You remembered that word! You have a good memory." Say another sentence back to her about the word. "Yes, that truck is *huge*, just like the *huge* elephant at the zoo!"
- Play games with the beginning sounds in words. For example, play "I Spy." Say, "I spy something that starts with the letter b. It is a yellow fruit. What is it?" The first few times you may need to help your child with the answer. In this case, help your child answer, "banana."
- Play games that stretch out the sounds in words. Say a word slowly, in parts, and ask your child to put the parts together to guess the word. For example, say the words "Cup" and "cake" to your child. Then ask your child to tell you what the word is. Your child should answer, "Cupcake!"