

Vocabulary Boosters for Kids

A Guide for Parents

Having a broad vocabulary has huge benefits for children, increasing their confidence as readers, writers and talkers. Try these ideas to boost your child's word power!

Talk, Talk, Talk

Be a talking family. Plan regular times where the family sits down and talks together. Mealtimes are ideal. Use great vocabulary when you speak to your child. Talk about the things you see around you, what you've done that day or are planning to do tomorrow/next week/on holiday.

Answer Questions about Words

If your child asks you about a word, take the time to explain its definition and correct pronunciation. Older children can look words up for themselves. If you can, make links between the new word and others which may have the same root, for example telescope, television, teleport.

Read, Read, Read!

Read to or with your child every day. Talk about the words used in the stories you read and what they mean. Try using them in different sentences. Don't be afraid to read more challenging books to young children - they will love listening to the sounds of the words even if they don't know what they all mean. Encourage your child to ask questions about what is happening in the story and to retell the story or predict what may happen next.

Word of the Day

Have a word of the day. This can be a new word you've discovered or shared, a favourite word of yours, or a word you've randomly picked from a dictionary! Challenge the family to use the word at least once during the day, in context: in other words, they can't just say a sentence with the word in, it has to be part of a conversation or referring to something you've seen or done.

Encourage, Don't Criticise

If your child tries to use a word incorrectly, don't mock or criticise. Instead, praise her for trying out a new word, and talk about the word's meaning, perhaps thinking up a few examples of how it could be better used.

Play Word Games

Traditional games like Scrabble and Hangman are great for encouraging kids to try out new words or sparking discussions about what words mean. There are also some great 'word finding' games and apps available for use on tablets and phones.

Play, Not Just... But...

When describing something - perhaps the weather, or a meal - try to think of a better descriptive word than the most obvious one. For example, 'It's not just cold outside - but freezing!' 'This sandwich isn't just tasty - but scrumptious!' 'I'm not just happy - but delighted!'

Don't Be Afraid of Big Words

Don't be scared to use and explain longer words with your child. If he can say and understand 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' or 'Optimus Prime', he can cope with 'carnivorous' or 'multi-coloured', for example.