

VOCABULARY: MAINSTREAM ADVICE

General principles for developing vocabulary:

Children need to be able to understand the meaning of words before they can use them appropriately. They need to hear words many times in order to begin to understand and then use them. A new word needs to be heard approximately 17 times for it to be retained in long term memory. Words are remembered through meaning (semantic linking to other words) and through their structure (phonological knowledge e.g. initial sound, number of syllables and words it rhymes with).

Classroom strategies for learning new vocabulary:

- ❖ Choose words carefully e.g. key to the topic
- ❖ Find pictures representing the word/concept or draw a simple picture
- ❖ Display fascinating words e.g. a word wall / tree
- ❖ Over-learn new vocabulary. Give many multisensory opportunities to practise it, including how it looks, feels, sounds etc. Demonstrate with pictures, real objects and different contexts.
- ❖ Use gestures / act out new words.
- ❖ Pupils benefit from pre-teaching of vocabulary before the start of topics and reinforcement within lessons. This is often beneficial to carry out in small groups, rather than on a 1:1 basis.
- ❖ Create word webs: Use mind mapping to visually show the word and the associated ideas.
 - Encourage thinking around the meaning of each word e.g. what do you do with it , where do you find it , what category does it belong to
 - Talk about the sounds words start and end with. You can also clap the number of syllables.
- ❖ You could make a 'personal dictionary' from an exercise book divided into subject areas to write the words in.
- ❖ Use repetition. Use the word in different contexts.
- ❖ You can also collect words from reading e.g. words that will be useful in the child's writing.

For new words to enter long term memory they should ideally be reviewed in the following way:

- introduce new word
- review after 5 minutes
- review after 1 day
- review after 1 week
- review after 4 weeks
- review after 3 months
- review after 6 months

Supporting understanding of vocabulary in daily life:

- ❖ Simplify your language, repeating key words to the child.
- ❖ Check instructions containing abstract concepts / vocabulary are understood e.g. ask the child to give a definition of the word or use the word in a sentence.
- ❖ Avoid ambiguous words i.e. using the same word for different meaning. If you need to do this, explain what you mean e.g. where's the key for the door, add a key to your map, what are the key points.
- ❖ Talk about what the child is doing whilst they are doing it, e.g. 'You're measuring the liquid.' This introduces vocabulary in a meaningful way.
- ❖ If the child "talks around the word" (e.g. target pond - "water - where ducks live"), try the first sound or syllable as a cue. You could also use a forced alternative if you feel you know the word they are trying to remember, e.g. is it a rhinoceros or an elephant?
- ❖ If the child cannot recall a word and you don't know what it is, encourage them to describe the object e.g. 'What does it look like?' 'What colour is it?' 'What can you do with it?'

Useful Resources:

[Word Aware - Thinking Talking](#)