

21 ways to improve your child's vocabulary

1. Bring new words to life

If your child learns a new noun, find a picture of it online or in a book. If it's an adjective, think of things that can be described using the word or if it describes an emotion, show the feeling with a facial expression or hand gesture. It's fun to act out new verbs- try prowling around the house or sauntering to the shops.

2. Visualise new words on paper

To help remember the meaning of new words, you and your child could draw a situation that represents that word for them. For example, drawing a picture of them eating a Brussel sprout to represent the word 'reluctant'.

3. Encourage your child to query any new words they come across

Whether they ask you for the meaning, identify it themselves by probing its context or look it up in a dictionary, make sure they don't feel embarrassed about finding out the meaning of strange words. Take time to explain a new word if they ask you, or enthusiastically find out its meaning together. Show interest and delight when they share a new word with you.

4. Talk constantly with your child

Stimulating parent-child conversations are known to be one of the main influencing factors on vocabulary development. You don't have to talk about anything exciting- if you're at a loss, just describe what happened to you earlier while your child was at school, your daily routine at home or even draw on previous family holidays and other past shared experiences.

5. Spotting vocabulary everywhere you go

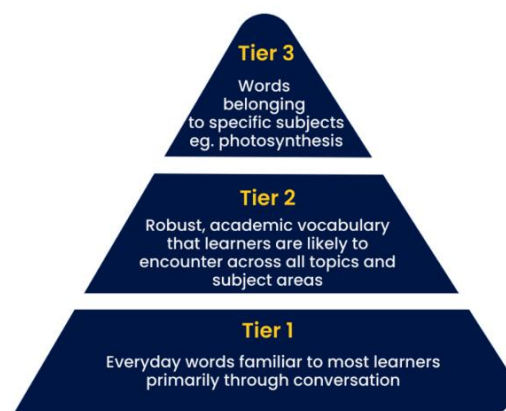
Whether you're visiting a museum, supermarket or boarding a train- talk about what you see and experience and look out for new words on signs and labels.

6. Have two-way conversations with your child

Don't just launch into a monologue when you talk to your child. Make sure your chat develops into a conversation by asking your child open-ended questions about how their own day has gone. The more practice they get at articulating their thoughts and feelings the more confident they'll grow in using newly learned words.

7. Don't 'dumb down' your own vocabulary

Use as wide a vocabulary as you can. There's no need to 'dumb down' your speech- aim to speak to them as if you're speaking to another adult. Academics call the type of challenging words that you can drop into everyday life 'tier 2 words'.



8. Repeat, repeat, repeat!

For the learning of a new word to become embedded, a child needs to encounter it more than once. Experts generally agree that typically a child needs to hear a new word between 4 and 12 times before it's committed to their long-term memory and so truly added to their vocabulary.

9. Don't bombard your child with lots of new words at once!

Introduce a manageable number of new words at a time- say, up to seven a week- for the whole family to then drop into conversation as naturally as possible.

10. Encourage them to read books

Unsurprisingly, numerous studies show that children who read a lot have a wider vocabulary than those who don't. This is because books typically include a much broader range of words than we use in everyday conversation.

11. Read aloud to your child

Even if your child is a good reader, reading aloud to them helps them to access harder texts than they'd be able to read on their own. This exposes them to more challenging words, and also creates the opportunity for conversation between you.

12. Encourage your child to read material other than books

New words can be learnt in a multitude of places. At home, a cereal packet could introduce your child to the word 'ingredients' and a car handbook to the word 'metallic'. Don't overlook the merits of reading magazines and newspapers, or online content either.

13. Allow your child to choose what they read

Whether they read alone or you read together, if they're interested in a topic or author, they are more likely to be absorbed in the story and so be curious about any new words they encounter- as well as developing a life-long love of reading.

14. Play games together

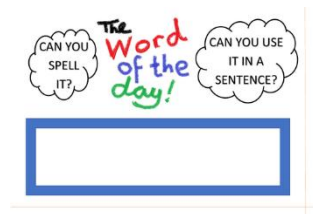
Board games such as Scrabble and Boggle are a great way to discover new words and consolidate knowledge. Word searches can also introduce new words and provide conversation-starters, while cross words are a good way to link a word to its meaning. Even 'I spy...' can be a way to introduce new nouns.

15. Unscramble the words

An 'unscrambling the word' activity is an effective method to review vocabulary, spelling, and critical thinking in children.

16. Word of the Day

The 'word of the day' is a simple yet effective vocabulary activity. Introduce your child to a new word every day, helping them understand its meaning, pronunciation, and usage. You could write the word on a whiteboard or sticky note and place it in a visible area and encourage your child to use it in a sentence by the end of the day!



17. Bingo with a twist

Transform the classic Bingo into a vocabulary activity! Instead of numbers, use words on Bingo cards. As words are called out, ask your child to mark them off on their card! For an extra challenge, don't say the word and encourage your child to work out which word you are describing!

18. Pictionary

Have a game of Pictionary with your child! By visualising and drawing out words, children can form stronger associations and recall them more easily.

19. Book scavenger hunt

Ask your child to find 5 interesting words in their reading book/ library book and talk about them together in more detail.

20. Word charades

Players act out a word without speaking, relying on gestures and expressions, making it one of the most interactive vocabulary practice activities! For younger children, simpler words can be used such as 'butterfly' or 'jumping'. For older children you could try words such as 'reflection' or 'astronaut'.

21. Be seen to learn yourself, too

If you encounter a word that's new to you, make a point of remarking on this to your child and introducing it to them- however obscure it is. As well as teaching them a new word, it conveys your own curiosity and shows them learning is a lifelong process.