

Home-based activities for primary school-aged children



Home based learning support activities

- ▶ The following tips and activities have been suggested by speech and language therapists to help develop primary-school aged children's speech, language and communication skills through home-based activities.
- ▶ Parents should not feel like they have to be “teaching” their child - there's lots they can learn from just talking and having fun .

Word Magic

Word Magic

This activity helps children to store and retrieve new words, and to deepen their understanding of words and what they mean.

Write a word in the centre of the word web (on the next page). Together with your child, work through the word web, asking your child each of the questions in the different parts of the web and helping them to fill in the answers.

Once you've completed the diagram, encourage your child to explain the meaning of the word to someone else to help them remember it. Then, look the word up in the dictionary or on Google – how do the definitions compare?

Optional extension



Play this the other way around – you fill in the outside parts of the word magic diagram first and see if your child can guess what the word in the centre might be.

Example:



Word: whisk

Describe it: it's a metal object, with lots of thin metal spokes in a long oval shape and a handle at the end for you to hold onto

What do we do with it: we use it for whisking/mixing ingredients when cooking. It's often used when baking to get extra air into the ingredients while mixing them

Where might we keep it: in the kitchen drawer

Who would use this thing: we've used it together when baking cakes

Anything else: it hurts your arm when you whisk things for too long! You can also use an electric mixer instead.

I spy

I spy

You can modify the game "I spy" to work on lots of different skills with your child – like describing things, listening for the first sound in words, or rhyming words.

What you'll need

Different items from around your home – toys, clothes, everyday objects, and food items. Don't collect them up – just make sure they are in view in the room you are in. Alternatively, you could use a selection of pictures of different objects – just lay them all out on the floor in front of you.

Optional extension

Switch this activity around by getting your child to describe an object or picture for you to guess.

How to play:



Idea 1: the first sound in words

Play "I spy" the usual way – by saying "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with..." and say the first sound of the object you are thinking of (e.g. "s" for "socks"). See if your child can guess what you're talking about.

Idea 2: describing words

Play "I spy" but describe the thing you are thinking about. Tell your child that you are going to give them clues about the object. Describe it by saying things like what the object is used for, what category it belongs to, what it looks like, any other words it's similar to, what sound it starts with, whether it's a long or a short word, any words it rhymes with....

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Helping children learn to communicate

Guess Who

Guess who

This activity can be used to help children to further understand important characters/people and practise using different words to describe people.

What you'll need

Pictures of different characters or people that you'll be discussing during the activity. You could cut pictures of people out of magazines, look in books, or look up pictures of people on the internet using your phone or tablet.

Once you've completed the diagram, encourage your child to explain the meaning of the word to someone else to help them remember it. Then, look the word up in the dictionary or on Google – how do the definitions compare?



Optional extension

Swap roles and get your child to describe a person for you to guess.

How to play:



Tell your child that you're going to describe someone, and their job is to guess who the person is from the description.

Depending on how difficult you want to make this activity, you can describe the person based on how they look, or to make it harder you could base your description on things the person has done, what their personality is like, or things that they have said.

Or, you could do a mixture of all these things!

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I'm going to the seaside

I'm going to the seaside...

This is a fun game that helps your child listen to the different sounds in words. This is an important building block for learning to read and write.

What you'll need

Nothing! Just you and your child.

Optional extension

Think of somewhere else you could go that begins with a different letter, and then take turns to think of all the things you could take that begin with that letter. For example, you could talk about going to the park and taking all things beginning with "p", going to the farm and taking things beginning with "f", or going to the museum and taking things beginning with "m".

How to play:



In this game, the rule is you can only take something to the seaside if it begins with the letter "s".

Take turns with your child to say the sentence, "I'm going to the seaside and I'm going to take my..." and say something beginning with "s" at the end. For example, you could say, "I'm going to the seaside and I'm going to take my scooter", "socks", "sandwich", etc.

Keep going until you run out of ideas or someone makes a mistake. See who manages to think of the most things.

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Sentence Starters

Sentence starters

This is a fun game to help your child play around with words and language.

What you'll need

Nothing! Just you and your child.

How to play: ?

Take turns with your child to begin a sentence and the other person finishes it. Decide whether it's silly or sensible. Some examples of sentences could be:

- Chicken is my favourite...
- One day I ate an enormous...
- In my garden I saw a...
- I won an amazing...
- The clown I saw was juggling...

See who can make up the silliest sentences! If there are more of you, you could each think of a different ending and then decide who made up the silliest one.

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Odd one out

Odd one out

This game helps to develop your child's deeper understanding of words and word groups.



What you'll need

No equipment required! Although you could use a pen and paper to write down the words to make it a bit easier for your child

How to play

Give your child a list of four words, three of which are types of a particular category or group, and one which is the odd one out. You can write the words down, or just say them to your child. Ask your child which is the odd one out and why?



Optional extension

Get your child to make up the list of four words for you to decide the odd one out!

Examples:



Sheep, cow, chicken, lion > lion is the odd one out because it's not a farm animal

Carrot, apple, orange, grapes > carrot is the odd one out because it's not a fruit

Chair, table, hat, sofa > hat is the odd one out because it's not furniture

Cabbage, yoghurt, potato, broccoli > yoghurt is the odd one out because it's not a vegetable

Football, rugby, judo, cricket > judo is the odd one out because it doesn't use a ball

Treasure hunt

Treasure hunt

Try setting up a “treasure hunt” for your child around the house or the garden. This is a great talking activity and it can also help to develop important skills like problem-solving.

What you'll need

Some everyday objects – such as a cup, a coloured sock, a ball, a pen. Alternatively, you could use cut up pictures or written words instead of objects.

Write down a list of the objects/pictures/words your child needs to find on a separate piece of paper. You could even draw a map for your child with clues of where they might find each object/picture/word!

Optional extension

Instead of drawing a map, you could make up clues about where you've hidden the object e.g. this thing is hidden in the room where we sleep / have breakfast. It's near the furniture where we keep our clothes / eat dinner etc

How to play:



Make a “treasure hunt” for your child by hiding the objects/written words/pictures around the house. Then give them their “list” of things to find and their map if you've drawn one. Depending on how many children are at home, they can work together or play individually.

As your child finds the objects/words/pictures, talk together about what it is and what it's for. For example, “That's a spatula, we use that for mixing and scraping the bowl when we are baking”. If there's a few of you playing, you could take turns to each say something you can think of about the object/word/picture before hunting for another one.

Afterwards, you could swap roles so that your child hides the objects/pictures/ words from you and draws you a list or a map to help you find them. Continue to talk about where each thing was as you find it.

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Crazy talk

Crazy talk

This is a fun game to develop listening skills

What you'll need

Just you and your child!

Optional extension

Swap roles so that your child makes up the sentences and you correct the mistakes!

How to play:



How to play

Say a sentence for your child with a deliberate mistake and see if your child can listen and correct the mistake. Some examples are given below:

- I love eating coal and chips
- My school is made of chocolate chips and bricks
- Maths is great, we do times chairs
- My mum likes beetles in her tea
- Saturday is the best day at school

A picture tells a thousand words

A picture tells a thousand words

Interesting or unusual pictures can really get children's imaginations going, as well as providing a lot to talk about.

What you'll need

Family photo album, cut some pictures from a magazine or display some pictures found on the internet via your phone or laptop.

Or you could use a book - "Where's Wally" books for example have lots happening on each page and give plenty to talk about.

Optional extension

Make up a story together with your child about what's happening in the picture. Start off with a traditional story beginning like, "One day...", then describe what's happening in the picture and help your child to think about what might happen next. Take turns adding an idea each until you have a complete story - you could even write it down and then illustrate the story together afterwards.

How to play: ?

Take turns with your child to look at the picture and say something about what you can see in it.

Talk about the thoughts and feelings of the people in the pictures as well as what they are doing. For example, you could say something like "I can see a seagull stealing the man's ice cream. The man looks like he's angry that the seagull stole his ice cream cone."

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Favourite things

Favourite things

This game gives your child practise at asking and answering questions to people. It also helps you to learn more about each other!

What you'll need

A piece of paper and a pen. That's it!

Get ready!

Tell your child you're going to interview different people to find out their favourite things. Together with your child, decide on the types of things you want to find out. For example, you could ask their favourite colour, food, season, book, sport, movie, day of the week, hobby – the list goes on.

Help your child to draw up a list of questions on their piece of paper to ask people. You might even like to draw up a table with people's names across the top to make it easier to record everyone's answers.

How to play:



Practise interviewing each other first – you ask your child what their favourite things are and record their answers on the paper, and then swap roles so your child asks you the questions. Next, help your child to ask anyone else in your family who you live with, and then call up different people your child knows and ask them over the phone or a video chat!

Go through the table with everyone's answers together at the end. Talk about what's the same and different about different people – for example, do any two people have the same favourite movie? The same favourite colour? Discuss why different people might have different favourite things.

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