How to help your child learn words

Things to remember:

* Have fun with words
* It is about talking as much as reading and writing
* When talking about words, use comments more than questions (describe what the word means and use it in a sentence rather than asking the child about it)

Word games to play at home

Treasure Hunt

This is a great one for the journey to and from school. When outside go looking for things such as:

* Objects that could be described by a particular word such as ‘gorgeous’ or ‘shrivelled’.
* Categories such as mini-beasts or things that need electricity, or things that are circular.
* Particular plants or insects such as ‘vines’ or ‘ladybirds’.

Draw, write or take photographs of these objects if you can, but above all talk about them.

Category call out

On the bus or in the car, think of a category. You can choose any topic but there are some ideas for inspiration: ‘living things’, ‘things with circles’ or ‘things made of metal’. Work as a team to see how many things you can see in a set time, such as two minutes. Next time see if you can beat your previous total.

I went shopping

This game is good for developing memory, so is good for adults too. One person starts by saying, ‘I went shopping and I bought a …’ (name a food item). The second player says, ‘I went shopping and I bought …’ and repeats the first player’s item before adding their own. And so on. See how many you can remember. A variation of this game is: ‘I went on holiday and I packed …’

Word of the day

Select a word for the day and write it somewhere everyone can see. This will work well with words that are sent home from school. Everyone then tries to use the word in a sentence as often as possible. The sentences must make sense and fit what you are talking about. They can’t be random nonsense. See who can use the word the most times and maybe have a prize.

Touch, taste and smell

Talk about sensory experiences as they arise. When you smell something (good or bad) talk about words you can use to describe it and use words other than ‘nice’ or ‘bad’. When you touch interesting things, can your child think of a word that describes how it feels? If they use words like ‘good’ or ‘nice’ challenge them to think of a more precise word such as ‘rough’ or ‘soothing’.

We will be sending new words and activities home to you. Try not to ask ‘What does it mean?’ Instead talk about these words in sentences.

At school we will be working hard to learn more words.

If you want to know more about supporting your child to learn words, speak to your child’s teacher.

Words are for speaking as well as reading. Talk about words as well as reading and writing them.

Have fun with words. Play the games that we send home, but also play any that you know. You can play word games in any language.

Children learn best if teachers and families work together.

If you speak other languages at home, talk about words in your own language. Play games, or translate English words into your own language.

Children need to understand words to understand what they are reading. Children also need words to understand science, maths and other subjects