

Keep It Positive. Keep It Simple. Keep It Real.

Un-Challenge Day Four

Critical Key #5: Develop a Passion for Words

Language development, especially vocabulary, is one of the strongest predictors of school and life success. Language skills underlie our ability to read text, access information, and communicate effectively. There are 3 simple ways to increase your child's language level:

- (1) provide more exposure to print, (2) encourage more speaking and writing, and (3) develop a passion for words.

20 MINUTE ACTIVITY

Back to Back

One of the biggest problems children have with language is providing specific, detailed descriptions of what they see, feel or experience. This 20 Minute Activity will help kids use words that are specific and clear.

You Need:

- several pictures or objects that are descriptive enough to draw
- blank paper and pens, pencils, crayons, or markers

Steps:

- Two people sit back to back. One has blank paper for drawing the other holds an object or picture that they will need to describe.
- The person with the object describes it using as many detailed words as possible. For example, instead of saying "this is a boat", you could say "this is a sailboat that does not have its sails open".
- You continue describing with as much detail as possible, while the other person tries to draw it.

Twists:

- With older kids, you can have the name of the object off limits or taboo so that they cannot use it in their description. In the example above, "boat" could be off limits.
- After playing back to back, research specific terms that would have made the drawing easier like keel, stern and helm. Help kids learn new words to be as descriptive as possible.



DAILY DOINGS

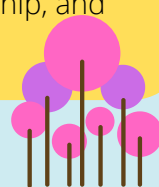
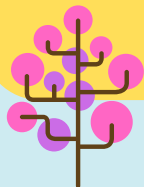
Encourage Precise and Descriptive Language

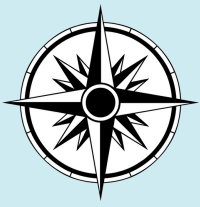
Too often kids use vague and imprecise language. "Will you hand me that thing?" can be met with "what thing might you be referring to (even if you know)?" "My T-shirt" can be met with "which T-shirt might you be referring to?" "My white T-shirt with the sparkly unicorn on it!" "Oh *that* T-shirt!" Production of precise language encourages a broader vocabulary!

My kids don't like to read.

I feel like I hear this challenge more and more from parents. Reading is a prime source of new vocabulary, so getting kids to engage with print is important. Here are a few ideas...

- Read aloud ~ not just picture book with little guys, but classics and mysteries and historical fiction with older kids as well. If your teenagers aren't into it (ours weren't at first), set a timer. "You only have to listen for 4 minutes. You can do anything for 4 minutes." If they can each have a copy of the book, all the better since seeing new words promotes retention.
- Take turns reading recipes and cooking. Recipes use great vocabulary like incorporate, whip, and simmer.





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PRE K - 2 ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS & MODIFICATIONS

Academic Standard: Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.

Home Connection: Knowing the meanings of common prefixes and suffixes opens up understanding about hundreds of words. For example, if you know that "tri" means three, then tricycle, triceratops, and triangle are all easier to decode. Here is a list of some of the most common prefixes & suffixes.

3RD - 5TH ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS & MODIFICATIONS

Academic Standard: Decode words with common Greek & Latin suffixes.

Home Connection: When a word is used that contains a Greek or Latin suffix, challenge your child to come up with other words that use the same suffix. Can they guess what the suffix means? For example, "Please turn off the television. What other words do you know that use the word part "tele"? Telephone, teleport... What do you think it means?" (far away).

6TH - 8TH ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS & MODIFICATIONS

Academic Standard: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Home Connection: Talk about the meaning of words from a newspaper or a newsfeed. Ask "what do you think the author meant by this? Why do you think they chose to use this word?" In the news authors choose words to make a point, so this is a perfect medium for this discussion.

Activity Extensions & Alternatives:

There are SO many games that encourage the development of vocabulary! Here are our twists on some of them to encourage language acquisition.

Scrabble - This classic game can teach a lot of new words just by playing. We give kids an extra point if they ask us what a word we use means. They get another extra point if we have to look it up! We also let younger kids use the Scrabble Dictionary (you can get hard copy or app versions) to try to make new words. They have to tell us the definition if they want to use it.

Scattergories - Another classic word game that gets kids thinking! Have the kids come up with the category lists to encourage buy in. Here is a [link to instructions and category lists!](#)

