**Supporting your child to learn new words**

Vocabulary is the building block for children’s language and is strongly linked to both literacy and educational outcomes. Many children with language difficulties find it harder to learn new words and benefit from additional support in this area.

To learn new words children will need to hear them lots of times in different contexts for them to become an established part of their vocabulary. Building on and extending existing vocabulary also helps children to learn new words.

**What vocabulary does my child need to know?**

When thinking about words you want your child to learn focus on words they will want to use e.g. words related to their interests, as well as words they need to use in everyday situations e.g. favourite foods and places or activities

If you want to support your child to learn vocabulary related to their school work talk to their teachers and find out which are the ‘key’ words they need to know to understand current concepts or topics. When thinking about a topic select some of the key words which are not too difficult but also not too easy for your child. Alternatively you can focus on ‘reviewing’ vocabulary related to curriculum subjects that your child has studied previously to ensure they are fully understood and retained.

**How do I support my child to learn new words?**

Everyday vocabulary be taught in activities that happen as part of your normal routine and conversation e.g. if you are expanding your child’s vocabulary for food then involve them in activities such as going shopping, putting shopping away, preparing food etc. Talk to them about what you are doing and let them handle/see the food items you are talking about. Discuss what they look like/smell like/ feel and taste like and how you can cook them. Do this on a regular basis so they get to hear and use the same vocabulary many times.

Your child may need to practice saying new words out loud many times to help them learn the pattern of the sounds in each word. You can help them by breaking down the sounds in the word e.g. think about what sound the word starts with, how many beats in the word (you can clap it out together to work it out) and whether or not it rhymes with another word.

To help your child learn curriculum based words you can also do the following :

* Make word books – keep a record of the words learnt and some information on what they mean. Make this together. Use simple pictures/diagrams to illustrate the word meaning. Put the word in a sentence and write it down.

Talk about and record information about the sounds in the word (*see above)*

* Act out the word - if it is an action word you can have fun acting out the meaning
* Play games – for example, if you are learning descriptive words you can play a ‘what’s in the bag’ game (objects are hidden in a bag and each person takes a turn to describe the object for others to guess without them seeing it). If you are learning action words you can take turns acting them out for the other person to guess.

**Revision**

Everyday vocabulary should get reinforced naturally as the words come up in context. Children will need more support to retain curriculum vocabulary as the words may not be used so frequently. Reviewing curriculum words helps fix them into the child’s long term memory. This needs to be done on a regular basis. You can make a word pot at home to do this. Write words you have learnt on a piece of paper and put them in a pot or box and everyday pick one out and talk about what it means/ put it in a sentence. If your child has forgotten the word, go back to the information in their word book and talk to them about it again. Remember to link it to words/ideas they are already familiar with.

**Top tip**

Encourage your child to ask if they don’t the meaning of a word – let them know this is a really good thing to do. You can encourage this by checking in with them e.g. every once in a while use a word you know they won’t be familiar with. Ask them after you have used it ‘do you know what ……. means?’ then talk to them about the word. Let them know it is okay to ask and that sometimes you might also hear words you don’t know and have to ask someone what they mean.

For further information on vocabulary development please go to:

<https://ican.org.uk/media/1306/vocabulary-learning-for-primary-years-november-2016.pdf>