



Strategies to support children with word-finding difficulties

There are two main strategies to help a child recall a word which they know but can not retrieve.

Some children react better to one strategy rather than the other. Children need to be taught to use these strategies to retrieve the words they can't find.

If a child never knew the word, the systematic teaching of a small core vocabulary during lesson time will support them to learn new vocabulary. It will probably also support many children without vocabulary deficits.

Phonological cueing

- What sound does it begin with?
- Is it a long word or a short word?
- What word rhymes with it?
- Can you clap the syllables? (Needs to be taught)
- Can you think of any other sounds in the word?

Semantic cueing

- What other words go with this word? (Category)
- What does it do? (Function)
- Where might you find it? (Context)
- Can you describe it? (Description)
- What else is like this? (For a noun) or
What else can you do like this? (For a verb) (Similarity)
- What else does it make you think of? (Association)

General Guidelines to consider when teaching “concepts/vocabulary” to children with SLCN

We try to teach concepts, labels, vocabulary, words and ideas to children and for those children with delayed or specific language difficulties this can be a challenge for all those involved.

- ❑ Teach the concept when it is needed – you then avoid teaching a label without giving a child a reason to use it
- ❑ Choose concepts that are appropriate to the child’s needs and developmental level
- ❑ Don’t rush – tackle in easy small steps
- ❑ Make the activity interesting and keep the child actively involved
- ❑ Use real objects and experiences whenever possible rather than pictures and “Supposing you were.....” situations
- ❑ Build in plenty of repetition in varied ways, e.g. concept in a different place, or with objects or different people, changing only one variable at a time
- ❑ Try to eliminate extra demands on the child, e.g. don’t expect them to learn a new label/concept and then think of a new idea or situation in which to use it
- ❑ Endeavour to make a solid, reliable connection between the language used and the action. Try not to give extra elaboration or explanation, which may confuse

Specific hints for children who have SLCN

Many children with SLC difficulties have labelling problems and may also have speech sound difficulties these make it harder for them to store words by their sounds. Therefore:

- ❑ Avoid teaching labels for words/ideas with similar sounds, similar meanings or opposite meanings at the same time, e.g. between/behind, big/little (Try big/not big)
- ❑ Reinforce concepts with a strong obvious semantic association:
“The trailer goes behind the lorry” (It wouldn’t really make sense in any other position)
“The kite goes up”
- ❑ For more abstract concepts try and start with a concrete aid first, e.g. for some aspects of time use a calendar or diary
- ❑ Introduce words with a less complex meaning first before labels that have a more subtle, restricted meaning.
e.g. Purple before lilac, lavender
Give before pay, hand-over, pass, donate, subscribe
Pick before choose, select, decide
- ❑ Be aware of using a range of words to describe the same thing and stick to one label.
e.g. The clock hands - decide what word you are going to refer to for the minute hand. Will it be “long”, “minute” or “big” (or even the colour if the teaching clock has different colours for the hands)
- ❑ Keep sentences short and simple
- ❑ If illustrating with pictures, choose pictures with only the featured concept so it is clear exactly what you are referring to
- ❑ Remember to consolidate and practice the new concept/label