



Vocabulary

Strategies for improving and developing vocabulary at home

Skilful writing is not easy; it involves using words that convey meaning vividly but also accurately. This guide will provide you with ideas to help develop your child's use of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, as well as general suggestions for supporting vocabulary use.

Nouns

Writing can be made more concise and accurate, by choosing precise nouns:

e.g. The **dog** barked frantically.

The **Alsatian, Labrador, Rottweiler, Jack Russell...**

The man stepped out of the **car**.

...the **Bentley, Nissan Micra, Limousine**

How can you help?

Have fun with nouns!

Play games that require children to use a wide range of nouns.

For example:

Alphabet nouns

- Choose a category, e.g. transport, countries, food.
- Take it in turns to go through the alphabet, thinking of a noun from the category. It would look something like this:

Transport

A - aeroplane

B - bicycle

C - car

D - dodgem!

E - PASS (If a player can not think of a noun for the letter, they pass. The other player scores a point and then starts at the next letter)

F - Ferry

Stop the Bus

- Draw a table like the one below onto a piece of paper (one for each player).
- Choose a letter (e.g. 't' - see grid below)
- Players have to think of one item to go in each category beginning with the set letter.
- The first person to complete the row shouts, "Stop the Bus!"
- Check their answers. If they are all okay, that person wins a point. If there are any mistakes in their words, let the game continue for another few minutes.

	Animals	Colours	Food	Clothes	Countries	Sports
T	Tiger	Turquoise	Tuna	Trousers	Tunisia	Tennis

Adjectives

Adjectives add information and detail to a noun. They can make our writing clear and interesting. However, children need to begin to use them discerningly, as they can also make our writing confusing, cluttered and less likely to have an effect.

To describe taste:

bitter, bland, delicious, fruity, gingery, minty, pickled, salty, sour, spicy, sweet, tangy, tasty, yummy

To describe touch:

boiling, breezy, bumpy, chilly, cold, cool, damaged, damp, dirty, dry, dusty, filthy, flaky, fluffy, freezing, fuzzy, greasy, hard, hot, icy, loose, melted, painful, plastic, prickly, rough, sharp, silky, slick, slimy, slippery, smooth, soft, solid, steady, sticky, tender, tight, uneven, warm, wet

To describe sound:

blaring, deafening, faint, high-pitched, hissing, hoarse, hushed, husky, loud, melodic, moaning, muffled, mute, noisy, purring, quiet, raspy, resonant, screeching, shrill, silent, soft, squeaking, squealing, thundering, voiceless, whispering

To describe colour:

azure, black, blue, bright, brown, crimson, dark, drab, dull, gold, grey, green, indigo, lavender, light, magenta, multi-coloured, mustard, orange, pink, pinkish, purple, red, rosy, scarlet, silver, turquoise, violet, white, yellow

To describe size:

abundant, fat, giant, gigantic, great, huge, immense, jumbo, large, little, long, majestic, mammoth, massive, miniature, petite, puny, scrawny, short, small, tall, teeny, thin, tiny, vast

To describe shape:

blobby, broad, circular, crooked, curved, cylindrical, deep, distorted, flat, fluffy, globular, hollow, low, narrow, oval, rotund, round, skinny, square, steep, straight, triangular, wide

To describe an amount:

all, ample, astronomical, bountiful, considerable, copious, countless, enough, every, few, full, heavy, hundreds, large, light, limited, little, many, measly, mere, multiple, myriad, numerous, paltry, plentiful, profuse, several, sizable, some, sparse, substantial, teeming

To describe a person or personality:

aggressive, ambitious, angelic, brainy, breathless, busy, calm, capable, careless, cautious, cheerful, clever, concerned, crazy, curious, deep, delightful, determined, different, diligent, energetic, erratic, evil, exuberant, famous, fearless, fragile, frank, functional, gabby, generous, gifted, helpful, hesitant, innocent, inquisitive, insane, jaunty, macho, modern, mushy, naughty, odd, old, open, powerful, puzzled, restless, rich, righteous, romantic, rustic, ruthless, sassy, secretive, sedate, shy, sleepy, sombre, stingy, swanky, tame, terrific, uninterested, vague, vivacious, wild

How can you help?

Have fun with adjectives!

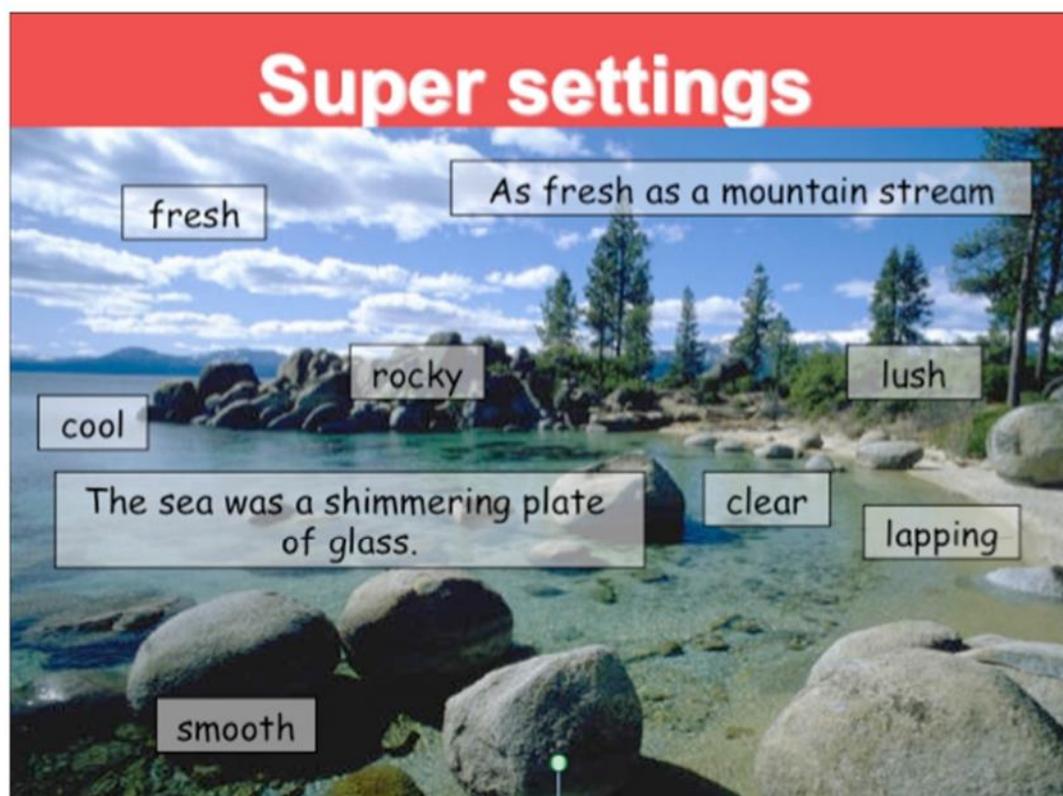
Play games that require children to use a wide range of adjectives.

For example:

Name the noun

Ask children to think of a **noun**. They must use **adjectives** (descriptive language) to help you visualise, and then guess, what they are thinking of.

Descriptive settings



This scene has been annotated with descriptive words, a simile and a metaphor.

Use a scene (out of the window, in a magazine, holiday photos) and ask children to think of fantastic vocabulary to describe it.

Sensory scenes



This scene has been annotated with prompts to encourage children to describe settings using their senses.

Use a scene (out of the window, in a magazine, holiday photos) and ask children to describe it, using their senses.

Verbs

Children need to become accustomed to thinking about varying the verbs they use. Good writing often hinges on choosing a powerful verb.

How can you help?

Have fun with verbs!

Play games that require children to use a wide range of verbs.

For example:

Synonym race

Give your child 30 seconds to come up with as many alternatives for...
'look', 'said', 'went', 'got', 'ate', 'touch'

Replace the verb

Choose verbs in your child's reading book and asked them to 'replace' the verb with an alternative. What effect does it have?

e.g. He went over to the window.

(moving slowly)

shuffled, crept, meandered, plodded, trudged, strolled, wandered

(moving unsteadily)

lumbered, toddled, doddered, waddled, limped, wobbled, lurched

(moving loudly or quickly)

stomped, marched, traipsed, strutted, paced, pounded

(moving quietly)

prowled, sneaked, tiptoed, crept, pattered

Adverbs

Adverbs add further detail and depth to writing by describing the way something happens. Mastering adverbs really gives children the impetus and confidence to make their own writing more colourful and interesting.

How can you help?

Have fun with adverbs!

Play games that require children to use a wide range of adverbs.

For example:

Charades

- Choose a verb to act out, e.g. danced, walked
- Brainstorm a list of adverbs that might go with the verb to describe how it was being done, e.g. 'wildly', 'softly', 'excitedly', 'happily'
- Take it in turn to perform the charade in the manner of the adverb.
- Can the other players guess which adverb they are acting out?
- Take it in turns

Quick fire adverbs

- Quickly call out verbs - your child must respond with an appropriate adverb without hesitating or repeating
e.g. eat - messily
play - noisily
sleep - peacefully
dance - wildly

General Vocabulary

How can you help?

Words are fun!

Generating an interest in words and how they work can encourage a love of language in children. Lots of **jokes** are based upon word play. Share them with your child and discuss how the play on words make them funny!

'The man who recently fell into an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.'

'I couldn't quite remember how to throw a boomerang, but I knew eventually it would come back to me.'

'He didn't tell his mother that he had eaten the glue. His lips were sealed.'

'What did the triangle say to the circle? 'You're so pointless!''

Can children think of any of their own jokes using word play?

Talking

In conversation, children will be exposed to new vocabulary. Encourage your child to **discuss** and **debate** with you; model using interesting vocabulary, specific to the subject.

Choose subjects that they may feel strongly about, and encourage them to elaborate on their ideas to support their argument, e.g. Should the school day be made longer? Is homework necessary?

Reading

Reading to and **with** children is extremely important to the development of vocabulary.

Tired Words

One way to develop more interesting writing is to **avoid tired or overused words**. You may be surprised at the extent of your child's vocabulary; however, though they may know the meanings of many words, they often don't employ them in their writing.

Read over the following sentence:

The book was very interesting.

There are other ways to convey the same message:

e.g. The book covered fascinating information.

e.g. This work, which was actually one of Mark Twain's first endeavours, was captivating.

Some words are specific enough, but they are so overused they are just plain boring. While it would be awkward to avoid these words all the time, children should take care to substitute more interesting words whenever appropriate.

Some tired and overused words:

amazing awfully

bad

beautiful

big

fine

good great

happy

interesting

look nice

quite really

said

so

very well

went