

Ed Extras

Helpful information about learning brought to you by Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado, and LD OnLine

Use Words to Teach Words

Students who comprehend the most from their reading are those who know a lot about words. These students know about word prefixes, suffixes, word roots, and multiple meanings of words. This knowledge expands their vocabulary, which helps when they encounter new words during reading. As students reach the upper elementary grades and the reading becomes more complex, word knowledge becomes even more important.

Families can help develop word knowledge through simple conversations focused on words. For example:

Start at the root

Begin with a simple root word, such as push. Ask your child to come up with words they know that contain that word, such as pushing, pushed, pushover, push-up. Talk about how all these words have some shared meaning related to the word push.

Multiple meanings

Many words have more than one meaning. While sitting at the dinner table, choose a word and brainstorm as many meanings and uses for the word as you can think of. Some words to start with: spring, frame, check, light.

Consider the prefix

Numeric prefixes like bi- and tri- are a part of many words kids know and use. Discuss words like tricycle, tricep, triangle. All these words share the prefix tri-, which means three. Can they develop a list of words that begin with the prefix bi- (like bicycle and binoculars)? This gives you a great chance to introduce new words, like bicentennial, bicep, and biped. You can generate similar word lists with the numeric prefixes uni, octo, and cent.

Word learning and vocabulary growth takes time and patience. Don't expect your child to learn each new word after one conversation. True word learning happens after being exposed to words several times. We all learn about words throughout our lifetime. You're getting your child off to a great start by developing an early interest in words.

For more on helping your child with word learning, read *Building Your Child's Vocabulary* www.ReadingRockets.org/article/32444

