

Vocabulary

Building Vocabulary during Storytime

Children who know and understand lots of words have a much easier time learning to read and write, and have a better understanding of how sounds make up words. Children learn new words best through repetition; it helps children to hear new words over and over again. Children also learn new words by being curious about what words mean. During storytime you can help children learn new words by pointing out unusual or interesting words and explaining what they mean.

Things to try

- Don't avoid tricky, long, or unusual words! Discuss new words and give children a chance to practice using them.
- Ask open-ended questions, and give children a chance to answer. Children will be encouraged to try new words in order to express their ideas.
- Repeat books and songs with children. Hearing the same words repeated will help children learn and remember new words.
- Read a wide variety of books. Nonfiction books especially introduce children to words they might not hear in other contexts.
- Children learn new words best in context. Rather than teaching new words in isolation, discuss words as they come up in stories or conversation.
- Relate new words to words children already know.

Book Suggestions:

Reading a wide variety of books on many topics is a great way to introduce young children to many new vocabulary words. Here are just a few to try:

- *Dig, Dig, Dig Those Dinosaur Bones* by Lori Haskins Houran
- *A Butterfly is Patient* by Dianna Hutts Aston
- *Blackout* by John Rocco
- *All the World* by Liz Garton Scanlon
- *Fancy Nancy* by Jane O'Connor
- *The Rainforest Grew All Around* by Susan K. Mitchel

Getting Started:

The traditional storytime structure naturally supports vocabulary building. By intentionally introducing children to new words, you can do an even better job of preparing children to read!

- When you come to an unusual word in a story, ask, "I wonder what that word means? Do you know?"
- Repeat new words and their meanings.
- Explain words, but do not replace them with more common words.
- Celebrate interesting words!