First Words Activity Ideas

It is helpful to choose just a few words to focus on over a period of time.

Repeat your chosen words in lots of different activities.

Here are some ideas to make learning new words fun.

Do not put pressure on the child to copy or say words. Have fun with the activity and don’t worry if it’s you saying all the words. Your child will be listening!

1. People’s Names

Often a child’s first words are the names of the people close to them, e.g. Mummy, Daddy, Nana.

- Look at photographs/videos of the family and talk about who you can see and what they are doing.
- Repeat people’s names lots of times, e.g. ‘It’s Mummy!’, ‘Look at Mummy’, ‘Mummy’s eating an ice-cream’.
- Don’t forget pets’ names.
- Take turns with ball games, bubbles or building bricks. Use repetitive phrases to name the person whose turn it is, e.g. ‘Mummy’s turn now’, ‘Daddy’s turn now’, ‘Jonny’s turn now’.
- When out for a walk/shopping, talk together about the people and families you can see, e.g. ‘There’s a baby’, ‘Baby’s with her Daddy’.

2. Social Words

‘Hello’ and ‘Bye bye’ are easy words to practice:

- Whenever anyone comes into view, or leaves a room. It will help to do an action like waving as well as saying the word.
- Say ‘Hello’ and ‘Bye bye’ to the toys when you get them out or put them away, e.g. ‘Hello bricks’, ‘Bye bye dolly’.
- Use a toy phone to encourage greeting words.

‘Thank you’ or ‘ta’

- Play give and take games. Say ‘thank you’ or ‘ta’ as you take the object or toy. Ta is easier to say than thank you. Children that start saying Ta easily move on to saying Thank you when they are ready.

‘Boo!’

- Take turns to hide behind something. Say ‘Boo!’ as you reappear.

‘Go!’

- Ready, Steady, Go: Play games which involve ‘ready, steady go’ e.g. ball rolling, car rolling, running, building towers and knocking them down. Try and build the anticipation to make the ‘GO!’ really exciting.
3. Making Requests

‘More’ is a very useful word for children to learn as it can be used in lots of different situations.

- Snack-time/dinner-time. When your child reaches out, or pushes his/her plate towards you to ask for some more, say ‘More’, ‘More please!’ as you give them more. Later pause before you give them more to see if they attempt the word.
- Play bubbles, making sure you only blow a few at once. When your child looks or makes a noise say ‘More bubbles?’
- Choose a favourite toy which your child needs your help to use properly, e.g. a spinning top. When it stops, ask ‘More?’

4. Making Comments

‘All gone’ or ‘gone’

- During snack-time/dinnertime give small amounts of food so that your child finishes what’s on his/her plate. Say ‘All gone,’ and offer more.
- With shape sorters/posting boxes, post pieces and say ‘All gone’.
- When someone leaves the room, e.g. Daddy, say ‘Daddy gone’.

‘Uh oh’

- Drop a toy off a surface or your head. As it falls, say ‘uh oh!’ with lots of facial expression and anticipation that your child might laugh / try to copy.

5. Common Objects and Toys

Repeat familiar words during your day


6. Body Parts

- During lap play, point out and name your child’s body parts, e.g. ‘eyes’, ‘nose’, ‘tummy’
- Name parts of the body as you wash or dry them, e.g. ‘Where’s your nose?’, ‘Let’s wash your nose’
- Sing ‘Head, shoulders ,knees and toes’ and carry out the actions.
- Put stickers on various body parts of teddies/dollies/your child. Say the name of the body part as you do it.
- Read books focusing on body parts e.g. ‘Eyes, Nose, Toes Peekaboo’.