Mrs Wordsmith ®

WORD TAG

PARENT & EDUCATOR GUIDE

Available on the App Store

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FOREWORD

When Mrs Wordsmith asked me to help them reimagine how vocabulary should be taught, I immediately perked up.

Vocabulary instruction has always had a reputation for being boring and ineffective, consistently falling into the trap of rote learning. But vocabulary is so critical in helping students increase their reading age and do better in school - in all subjects. It is one of the single biggest indicators of academic success, benefitting everything from self-expression to emotional intelligence. We need to stop boring our students. We need to meet kids where the conversation is. We see TikTok, Kahoot, and Minecraft take over the classroom. They are fast becoming teachers' tools of choice. But there is nothing quite so exciting on offer to help improve reading outcomes.

Until now, that is. Word Tag helps players develop vocabulary knowledge - one of the building blocks of reading. And it encourages creativity and an appreciation for language and art. It is a genuinely innovative, educational project, the only game that kids will be allowed to play all day, every day. I've enjoyed the journey of bringing it to the world.

Susan B Neuman
Professor of Childhood and Literacy Education, NYU

OUR EXPERTS

We are proud to have built Word Tag with world-leading experts from the worlds of education, linguistics, gaming, and entertainment.

Prof. Susan Neuman

Educator, researcher, and education policy-maker in early childhood and literacy development. Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning at NYU. Former Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education in the US Department of Education.

Prof. Ted Briscoe

Expert in computational linguistics, speech and language processing, textual information processing, and evolutionary linguistics. Professor of Computational Linguistics at the University of Cambridge and the inaugural director of the Alta Institute.

Michael Levine

Expert on children's education and media, and Sesame Workshop's first Chief Knowledge Officer. Advisor to several US government agencies, including the White House, the Department of Education, PBS, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Emma Madden

Headteacher at London's Fox Primary School, which has been named as the UK's highest-performing primary school for three consecutive years. Advisor to many schools and provides training to teachers in schools across London.

Eleni Savva

Expert in linguistic semantics, and is Curriculum Director at Mrs Wordsmith. MPhil in Linguistics from the University of Oxford and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Cambridge.
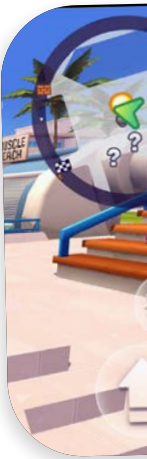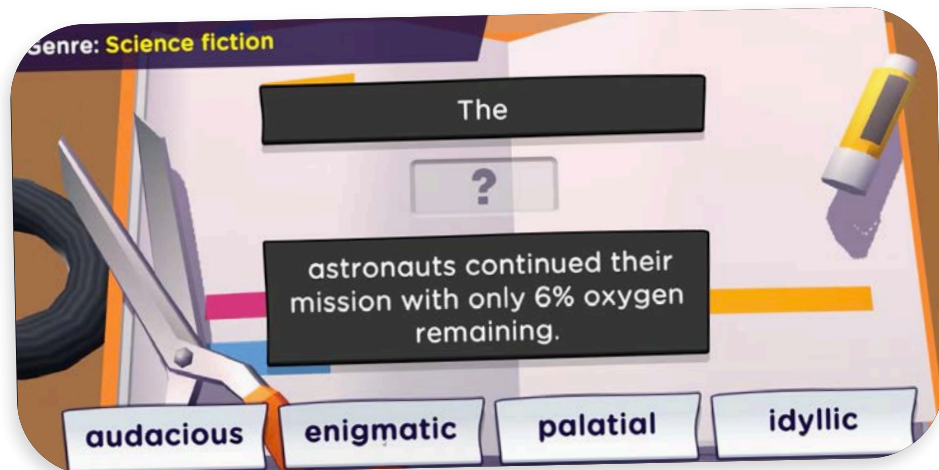
Björn Jeffery

Entrepreneur, strategic advisor, and board member within media and technology. Co-Founder of Toca Boca, one of the most successful mobile kids' brands globally with over 200,000,000 downloads globally.

LEARN AND EXPLORE

Word Tag unites learning and fun through gamification.

It replaces traditional in-game combat and trials with **pedagogically-driven missions** and minigames that see kids learning new vocabulary to advance levels and earn rewards.

BLABBERBUCKS
Great for buying stuff!

CLAIM

Genre: Science fiction

The

?

astronauts continued their mission with only 6% oxygen remaining.

audacious   enigmatic   palatial   idyllic

REWARDS
B 500

SEASON UNLOCKS

The key objective is to learn **up to 1,000 additional words** in a year by exploring the city, finding new vocabulary, and spraying walls with street art. The more words players learn, the more of the world they can unlock and explore!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The pedagogy of Word Tag uses the player's school Grade/Year (chosen before starting the game) to select words that are relevant and at the right level of difficulty.

Word Tag generates a word list aligned to each player's school grade/year and predicted stage of vocabulary development. Research shows that learners can acquire vocabulary well above their reading age when taught effectively **(1)**.

Players are exposed to words through fun learning and practice activities:

- New **Daily Words** activities, introducing the pronunciation and meaning of unique new words every day
- **Sentence games** that provide context for each word
- **Pop Quizzes** with synonyms and common word pairs
- **Races** to collect coins

Players learn **word definitions**, **synonyms**, and **common word pairs** by selecting answers on a virtual wall and turning them into street art to celebrate the accomplishment. They see these words again later in a sentence game that provides an accurate context for their use.

Repeated word exposure through different activities reinforces understanding and clarifies the meaning of new vocabulary.

Kids don't see learning words in Word Tag as their goal – it's not a lesson. Instead, word-learning is the mechanism by which they progress to the next level and collect rewards and explore. Reaching new levels and features can only be achieved through word-learning success, and so education itself **becomes the game**.

WHY WORD TAG WORKS

1. ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Word Tag is all about engaging with new words in a fun-filled way, which significantly increases retention **(2)**.

2. WORD REPETITION

According to research, learners need several encounters with a word to add it to their vocabulary. Word Tag boosts retention by repeated exposure to new vocabulary.

3. LEARNING PROGRESSION

Research also demonstrates that games can provide constructive feedback and a feeling of accomplishment.

Word Tag allows players to try until they succeed, and gives them challenges that are tailored to their skill level.

4. SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Free play and exploration are crucial for learners' cognitive development, cultivating curiosity and a desire to learn **(3)**. In Word Tag, players complete word collections full of rich vocabulary at their own pace while exploring the vibrant settings, and are free to choose how long and often they want to play.

5. CHARACTER-BASED LEARNING

Interacting with fictional characters such as Roxy and Wolfgang is educationally and psychologically beneficial **(4)**. Learners are more likely to retain new information when presented to them by a character (especially while helping them complete a mission). Identifying with a relatable character can even increase learners' empathy.

WORD ENGINE

According to literacy experts, kids should learn words that they are likely to encounter frequently across a range of different contexts. At the same time, these words should not be so common that kids are likely to know them already. To identify these words, our team of linguists and data scientists mines databases of vocabulary found in major exams, school curricula, and classical literature. We also use word lists compiled by vocabulary experts such as Andrew Biemiller's Words Worth Teaching. **(5)**

Our proprietary AI Word Engine classifies these lists according to their difficulty and topic, considers the context in which each word might appear, and assesses its meaning difficulty based on its Lexile difficulty score. Players see words tailored to their abilities and needs.

APPENDIX

1. Beck, I. and McKeown, M. (2007). Increasing young low-income children's oral vocabulary repertoires through rich and focused instruction. The Elementary School Journal, 107 (3), 251-271.

2. Abrams, S. S., and Walsh, S. (2014). "Gamified Vocabulary. Online resources and enriched language learning". *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(1): 49-58.

3. Hadani, H., Jaeger, G., Fortescue, E., Rood, E., Runco, M., Hoeft, F., Myers, C., Patael, S. (2015). Inspiring a Generation to Create: Critical Components of Creativity in Children. Center for Childhood Creativity. Sausalito, CA.

4. Gray, J., Reardon, E., Kotler. J. (2017). "Designing for Parasocial Relationships and Learning: Linear Video, Interactive Media, and Artificial intelligence". In *Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Interaction Design and students (IDC 17)*. ACM, NewYork, NY, USA, 227-237.

5. Biemiller, A. (2010). Words worth teaching: Closing the vocabulary gap. Columbus, OH: SRA/McGraw-Hill.