

Using your Vocabulary Cards

I. Naturally Expose the Children to the New Vocabulary

Building verbal language skills is the first step in the child's road towards mastering language. The first words a child needs to know are those most relevant to her. For example, her name, the names of the people and items in the home, the parts of her body, the names of her teacher & classmates, etc. Before using vocabulary cards, naturally expose the children to new vocabulary by regularly using it in conversations, by noticing the objects when you encounter them in daily life, and by reading books that feature the objects. This is your opportunity to bring the words to life for the child.



II. Practice the Vocabulary with the 3-Period Lesson

Children can most easily internalize vocabulary when it is used in connection with the object/item itself. For this reason, it is best to use real things when teaching vocabulary. When they are not available, use photos that isolate the object being presented.

Period 1: Place 3 or 4 photo cards on a clean workspace that is free from distractions. Touch and name the first card. Say, "This is a dog." Repeat for all.

Period 2: Move your hands away and say, "Show me the dog." If s/he cannot or points to the wrong card, simply move back to period 1.

Period 3: Point to a card and say, "What is this?" If the child does not say the name, simply move back to period 2.

Depending on the child, you may get through all 3 periods in one lesson or you may need to repeat the first two periods over the course of several days before the child is ready to demonstrate mastery in period three. Keep in mind that it is during the second period that most learning takes place. Place your emphasis there.

III. Play I Spy

This simple game gives the child the opportunity to listen for and identify the sounds within words. As he learns to hear the components of a word, he develops phonetic awareness. He begins to understand that all of those words are made up of smaller components—of sounds. Once this happens, he can begin to link those individual sounds with their symbols—the letters of our alphabet.

Lesson I: Gather a child or small group of children around you. Say, "I spy with my little eye, something in Kyra's hand that starts with the sound 'puh.' Of course, Kyra is holding nothing but a pencil so her chance of succeeding, of figuring this out, is high. Continue to sound out the word, 'Puh en ssss ull.' Do this as much as you need to until one of the children hears it and says, "pencil." Continue for as long as the children are interested. The intent of this first lesson is to help children understand the mechanics of this game in a way that nearly guarantees their success...even though they may not yet be skilled at noticing the sounds within words.

Lesson II: Walk about the room together and select 6 or 8 objects/photos to work with. This is one of your earliest opportunities to help the child see that she can find what she needs to work with in the room, that she is free to take what she needs to do her work. The first time you play, you want to choose objects/photos that have different initial sounds. Give her a few options if she needs them. (Once she gets the hang of it, it will not be a problem if she chooses objects with duplicate sounds.) Place each vocabulary card or object on the work space and encourage the child to say its name as you do so. (The child must know the name of each item before playing I Spy.) Say, "I spy with my little eye something on the rug that starts with 'mmmm.'" Repeat the sound and then, unless the child points to it, point to the monkey and say "MMMM uuuhh nnnn kuh eeeee, MMMM uuuhh nnnn kuh eeeee." Repeat this for the other objects. Encourage the children to take turns so that they immediately learn how to play the game without help.

Lesson III: The same as Lesson II but spy the ending sound in the word. Say, "I spy with my little eye something that ends with the sound eeee." When you pronounce the word, carefully articulate all parts of the word as in Lesson II but emphasize the ending sound as in "mmmm uuuhh nnnn kuh EEEEE."

Lesson IV: The same as Lesson II but spy the middle sound in the word. Say, "I spy with my little eye something on the rug that has the middle sound uuuhhhh." When you pronounce the word, carefully articulate all parts of the word as in Lesson II but emphasize the middle sound as in "mmmm UUUHHH g"

Using your Foreign Language Cards

Building Vocabulary

The best way for a young child to learn another language is to be immersed in it. If you or your teaching partner is fluent and the administration supports it, one adult should speak English exclusively and the other his/her native language exclusively. Over time, the children will thoroughly absorb the language being spoken. (This is common practice in bilingual locales such as Montreal, Canada). When this is not an option, we can teach a foreign language just as we teach children new vocabulary in our own language, via the 3-period lesson. And as with our first language, the children will grow to master the words only if they are given many opportunities to hear the words used properly and to use the words properly. As you work through the 3-period lesson, keep in mind that it is during the second period that most learning takes place. Place your emphasis there.

Period 1: Place 3 or 4 photo-only cards on a clean workspace that is free from distractions. Touch and name the first card. Say, "*This is* un camion d'incendie." Repeat for all. If you are able, speak only in the second language when doing foreign language work. For example, if teaching French, say, "C'est un camion d'incendie."

Period 2: Move your hands away and say, "*Show me* un camion d'incendie" or "Montres-moi un camion d'incendie." If s/he cannot or points to the wrong card, simply use your own hand to point to the correct card and repeat period 1. Continue to ask the child to "show you" the other photos. Keep it lively by asking them to put the cards in different locations. For children who need to move, use two tables on opposite sides of the room and instead of saying "show me" say "bring me" or "portes-moi." You can teach children how to play the bring me game with each other. It is wonderful independent work. Have fun with it!

Period 3: Point to a card and say, "*What is* this?" or "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" If the child does not say the name, give him/her a hint like the first sound of the word. Do whatever you can to help the child succeed! If s/he still cannot name the object, return to period 2. When the child grows confident with the vocabulary, have fun by mixing up the cards before asking the child to name them. Add an element of mystery by asking the child to close his/her eyes while you or some other children mix up the cards.



un camion d'incendie



un camion d'incendie



un camion d'incendie

Reading the Words

Phonetics (the sounds a certain symbol makes) differ from language to language. For some languages, like Spanish and French, the letters and their phonetic sounds are similar to English. For that reason, children who are solid readers in English can often make the leap to work through words in French and Spanish. Ideally, though, children will first be exposed to the foreign alphabet and the phonetic sounds associated with each letter. Once the vocabulary is known and the phonetics of the alphabet are presented, you can show the children how to read the 3-part cards.

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards (which include the word and photo on one card) upside-down on the workspace.
3. Place the picture-only cards right side up in a column on the left side of the workspace. Say the name of each as you put it down.
4. Pick up a word-only card. Say, "Let's see if we can match the pictures with these names." Help them with a few (sound out each letter/phonogram) and then place the labels under the corresponding picture.
5. Say, "Now, let's check and see if we were right!" Layout the control cards next to the matching pictures. Let the child discover his/her own errors and fix them independently. If s/he can't see the errors, s/he may not be ready for this work.

Notes

- Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
- Begin with the cards that the child is most familiar with (eg, the Transportation cards for a child who loves cars).