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ABSTRACT

This booklet presents parents with 10 tips for helping their children expand their vocabulary. The 10 tips in the booklet are: read and use context; look for synonyms and antonyms; rhyming and homophones; compound words; look for related words; prefixes and suffixes; word maps; see how words are formed; mine the wealth of other languages; and use the dictionary. It concludes with the advice that these tips are adaptable to children's age level and experience. (RS)

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# Build Your Child's Vocabulary!

## Ten Fun and Easy Tips

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# A Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

Your child's vocabulary is the mental tool chest used to communicate ideas and feelings. Someone who has the verbal equivalent of a saw, a pair of pliers, and a screwdriver can accomplish a lot more with words than someone who has only a "hammer."

The more words your child has at his fingertips, the more precise he can be when expressing his thoughts. At school and in the world of work, the ability to present ideas clearly is a key element of success. By expanding your child's vocabulary, you can improve his success at school, boost his IQ, and improve future job opportunities.

Because words help people manage in a world full of information, the larger your child's vocabulary is, the better he'll be able to gain control over school subjects and life in general. He will be able to articulate questions about problems at school and feel more comfortable talking about his deeper feelings at home.

The single most effective thing parents can do to expand their children's vocabulary is to read with them and encourage an interest in a variety of books. Talking about what is being read will help your child relate new words to ones he already knows. That's how vocabularies grow!

# Read and use context.

# 1

**T**he best way to start building your child's vocabulary is to read books. Have her point out words she wants to learn, and help her figure out what each word means by looking at the sentences around it. Phrases like "that is" or "for example" may indicate a definition is going to be given. But even if the new word isn't clearly defined, she can discover the meaning from information provided by the surrounding words.

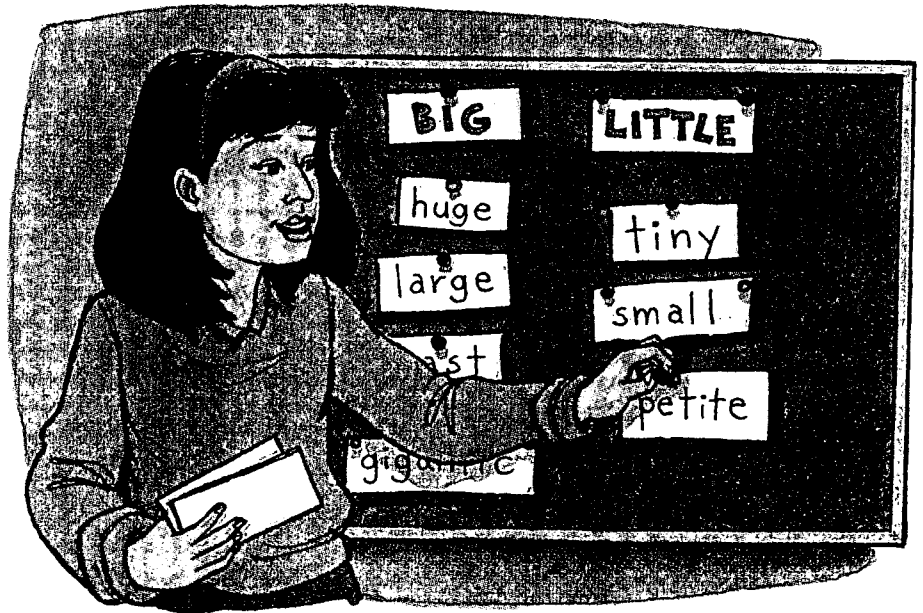


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# 2

## Look for synonyms and antonyms.

**H**elp your child find different words for the ones she uses every day. Synonyms are words that have the same meaning (*warm* and *tepid*); antonyms are words with opposite meanings (*hot* and *cold*). When she encounters a new word, she can understand it better if it is related to a familiar word. Searching for synonyms and antonyms encourages her to discover different ways of expressing her ideas.



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# Rhyming and homophones.

3

Children love the sounds that words make. Rhyming games using poems and songs will increase vocabulary as your child hunts for words that rhyme. Words that sound the same, but have different spellings or meanings are called homophones (like *tale* and *tail*). Have her make up sentences that use homophones, then talk about the meaning of each word.



8



# 4

## Compound words.

**Y**ou can take two words your child knows and join them together to form a new word. These compound words can be introduced easily because he already understands the pieces of the new word. You can also take a compound word he already knows and break it apart to show how the meaning of each word combines to make the compound word.



# Look for related words.

# 5

**L**ooking at the structure of words with your child will help him understand how some words are built. Base words are the most familiar words in the English language, and they don't need anything else to make their meanings clear. Start with a simple base word (verbs work best) and see how many different words he can come up that use the same base.



# 6

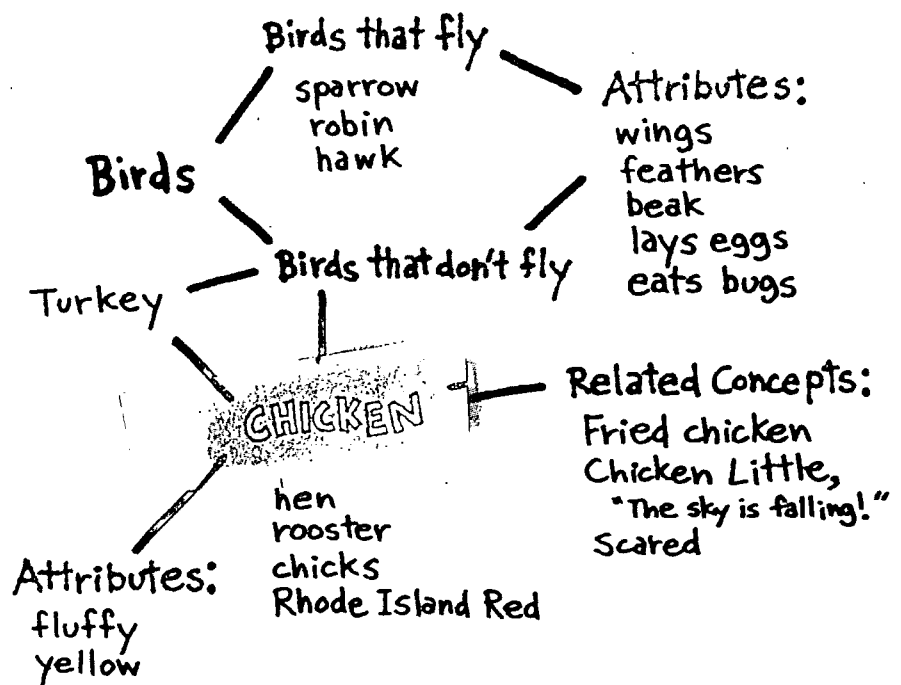
## Prefixes and suffixes.

**A** prefix is a syllable added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. A suffix is just like a prefix, but is at the end of a word. Have your child make a list of familiar words, then add prefixes, such as *dis-*, *un-*, *re-*, *over-*, *pre-*, and *post-*. Do the same with suffixes, such as *-ful*, *-er*, *-s*, *-able*, *-ish*, and *-est*. See how the meanings change with each prefix or suffix.



## Word maps.

**A** word map is a diagram of relationships between words. Much of your child's vocabulary can be thought of as being "stored" in word maps. When your child finds an unknown word, help him build a word map that shows how the new word fits into his current vocabulary.



# 8

## See how words are formed.

The English language forms new words in many ways. For example, parts of two words can be *blended* to create a new one (MOtor hoTEL = *motel*); a word can be *clipped*, with a part used to represent the whole (flu for influenza); or an *acronym* can be formed using the initial letters of words in a phrase (*Scuba* = Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus). Have your child look for words that are formed in these three ways.



# Mine the wealth of other languages.

# 9

**B**orrowing words from other languages is another way that the English language has grown. You and your child can look in the dictionary together and see how many common words have come from Latin or Greek. Check the Native American roots for words like *coyote*, and *squash*. Finally, follow the different stages of Old, Middle and Modern English, which originated in Anglo-Saxon and German.



# 10

## Use the dictionary.

**M**ake sure your child understands how the dictionary works. Look at the first few pages to find instructions, and sit down with him to find out together what he can learn about the following terms:

- Guide Words
- Main Entries
- Definitions
- Parts of Speech
- Syllable Structure
- Pronunciation



# Conclusion

**Y**ou can adapt any of these vocabulary techniques to your own child's age level and experience. Let your child know that developing a good vocabulary (and getting "smarter" in the process) is just a natural part of growing up!









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