

Work your core — vocabulary, that is!

It's so much more
than just...



What is Core Vocabulary?

Core vocabulary are useful words that people use again and again. These words get used across a wide range of daily activities, and are needed throughout a person's life. It is important for your child to develop a solid set of useful, reusable words to express him or herself in a way that is flexible, spontaneous, and guides him or her to communicate with others for a variety of reasons.

What we don't want to do as parents, teachers, and therapists is limit a child's vocabulary by modeling just nouns (i.e. people, places, & things), and academic words such as letters, numbers, shapes, and colours. If we do this, we steal away opportunities for a child to communicate with us in useful, meaningful ways!

What kinds of words should I model for my child?

Model words that serve a useful purpose:

Greetings - hi, mama
Parting- bye, later
Request assistance- help, do,
Existence- that, this, look, see
Nonexistence- away, all gone, no more

Rejection- no, stop
Comment- mean, big, like
Cessation- stop, different
Recurrence- more, again
Directive- go, stop, get, put, come

Model words that are considered to be "high frequency words." According to Van Tatenhove (2005) the top 22 words used by toddlers include:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. all done/finished | 12. no |
| 2. go | 13. off |
| 3. help | 14. on |
| 4. here | 15. out |
| 5. I | 16. some |
| 6. in | 17. that |
| 7. is | 18. the |
| 8. it | 19. want |
| 9. mine | 20. what |
| 10. more | 21. yes/yeah |
| 11. my | 22. you |



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How should I model these words for my child?

When it comes to speech-language practice at home, short (5 to 15 minutes), daily practice sessions which are embedded within **meaningful** daily routines are more effective than what any flashcard activity can offer. Avoid trying to sit and 'practice' for an hour once a week. Find ways to incorporate the vocabulary into mealtimes, bath time, story time, outdoor time, songs and toy time. Join in, get an interaction going, start labeling and describing what he or she is interested in, and keep it natural and fun!

We teach new words to children by **PLAYING** and **DOING** things together! Flashcards, DVDs, and TV shows should be avoided. Also, until your child has a base of useful, every day words, avoid trying to teach academic words such as: colours, numbers, letters and shapes – these will come later.

Activity Ideas:

Playing Together & Taking Turns. Playing activities that require turn-taking is a great way to teach your child turn-taking and words such as "you" and "my." Take turns rolling a ball back and forth, blowing bubbles with a wand, stacking blocks, pushing cars down a ramp, placing items on a Mr. Potato Head, placing pieces of a puzzle, or using craft items (e.g. glue, scissors, crayons, markers). Say "My turn," when it is his/her turn, and "You go Mommy/Daddy (teacher/name of friend)" when it is your turn. This way you are modeling language s/he could say from his or her perspective.

Describing what he is doing, what you are doing, and what others are doing. Talk with your child all day long. During play and daily routines talk about what he is doing, (e.g. "You are playing," "You are eating,") and talk about what you are doing ("I am washing my hands. Now I'm drying them.").

Playing hide and seek games is a nice opportunity for modeling location/spatial words such as on, off, out, in, under, etc. Try hiding a few small toys around your home, and have your child go on a search for them. Once he or she finds a toy, encourage him or her to say "here it is!," and talk about where it was located e.g. "The bear was under the bed."

Reading Together. Share a book or two with your child every day. Introduce book time after bath, just before bed. Sit with him or her in bed and look at the books together. Focus on just describing the pictures – describe what you see, and the actions of the characters (e.g. The girl is smiling, The dog is playing, It is eating, The man is walking).

Limiting Screen Time. No more than two hours of TV or device use a day. No TV or devices at meal times. Sit and talk together while you eat. Interaction is the gateway for language learning, and too much screen time interferes with this!

Important Tips:

- Get face-to-face. Be at the same physical level as your child when you are talking.
- Model words slowly, then pause (count 4 to 5 seconds in your head) to give your child a chance to express the word if they so choose.
- Do not force your child to copy you - just let him or her listen and watch, and give your child a chance to try it by pausing.
- Repetition is the key. The rule is for you to model and repeat a new word(s) 3 to 5 times, in a natural way, within one situation.

Web Resources & Articles:

KidsAbility's website has many resources available to help you and your child. For Speech-Language specific articles, videos and tips, visit: kidsability.ca/speech-language

