

## Practical Ways to Teach Concepts

### Stage 1 – allow the child to experience the word

Show: 'Act out' the concept if you can e.g. go in the playground and walk *fast* or *slow*, make your hands *dirty* by putting them in mud then wash them so they are *clean*, get some instruments and play them *loudly* or *quietly*, sit *on* or *under* the table, walk *towards* or *away from* each other. Choose a task where activities need to be done in a certain order e.g. making toast, getting dressed. Do the activity with the child or act it out with toys (e.g. dress dolly, teddy going out). Use to target ***positional, qualitative, and time/ sequence concepts.***

Looking at books: Talk about concepts that you can see in the pictures e.g. 'Look at the big elephant', 'That elephant is first in the line', 'The monkey is next to the elephant'. Use to target ***positional, quantitative, temporal/ sequential and qualitative concepts.***

Feely Bag/ Mystery Box: Put real objects that show the concept you are trying to teach in a bag, take turns to take an object out of the bag and talk about it. Use to target ***qualitative concepts.***

Mini Objects/ Toys: Show and describe the concept e.g. 'teddy is behind the chair' 'the pencil is in the box', 'put the mouse on the box', 'make teddy walk up the stairs'. Talk about the objects' qualities, give them a bath while working on wet/dry, etc. Use to target ***positional, quantitative, temporal/ sequential and qualitative concepts.***

Craft: Draw, paint, use stamps, or play dough to make objects that fit the concept description e.g. tall people, little animals. Model full and empty by drawing two squares on a piece of paper and putting a lot of stamps in one box and no stamps in the other. Use stamps with different colours, patterns and size to target these concepts. Build in quantity words as you direct the craft. Use to target ***positional, quantitative, temporal/ sequential and qualitative concepts.***

Lego: comment on colour, size and shape and placement of blocks in/ on. Use to target ***positional, quantitative, temporal/ sequential and qualitative concepts.***

Vehicles: (trains, cars) – model colours, fast, slow, big, small, long, short, same, different, large, small, quiet, loud, wide, narrow, first/next/last, 'before/ after, on, off, up, down, under, over. If your vehicles are big enough to fit mini items inside you can model in/ in front, behind, inside/ outside. Use to target ***positional, quantitative, temporal/ sequential and qualitative concepts.***

Dollhouse/ Farm (or an App such as MyPlayHome): Describe the figurines and items in the house/ farm. Place a doll somewhere in the house for the child to find and talk about where it is (*under* the bed, *on* the table). Use to target ***positional and qualitative concepts.***

Play kitchen (or an App such as Toca Kitchen): to model hot/cold, clean/dirty, same/different, big/little. Try positional concepts by building an ice cream cone, sandwich, or hamburger using pretend food. Use to target **positional and quantitative concepts**.

Wind-up toys: talk about them being fast/slow, stop/go, and put them in, on and under things. Use to target **positional and qualitative concepts**.

Posting: items down a tube e.g. 'Post **a** blue brick', 'Post *some* of the yellow bricks' or in sequence '*first* a blue brick, *next* a red brick'. Use to target **positional and quantitative concepts**.

Obstacle course: as the child goes *around, through, under, and over* obstacles, highlight the respective words. Use to target **positional, and temporal/ sequential concepts**.

Hide and Seek/ Treasure Hunt: hide a toy for the child to find then talk about where it is found e.g. "it's *under* the table". Make up clues containing position words for a treasure hunt and then hide them round the room. Put a small prize in the last hiding place. Use to target **positional concepts**.

Make a pretend bus: by setting out chairs and talking about where each person is sitting or describing who got on first, next or last. Use to target **positional, and temporal/ sequential concepts**.

Dressing up: Comment on what the child is wearing and where they are wearing it e.g. "Look at your *big* hat." "You have the socks *on* your feet". "You have the t-shirt *under* your jumper".

Simon Says: games where instructions contain your target word/s. Put your hands on your head", "... sit *under* the table". Or incorporate Follow my Leader: call out a concept and everyone has to demonstrate that concept or find someone who demonstrates that concept and line up behind them. Use to target **positional, and temporal/ sequential concepts**.

Ball poppers & Balloon pumps - Pop the ball popper or blow up the balloon and let it fly, then talk about where the ball or balloon landed (*on* the bookcase, *next to* the desk, *behind* the door, etc.). Use to target **positional concepts**.

Packing away: describe the item's qualities as you pack them away or talk about the order you are packing things away in "We put away the horse first". Use to target **qualitative and temporal/ sequential concepts**.

## **Stage 2 – work on it in a structured game**

Workbooks: You may wish to use workbooks for specific individual concepts provided by your SaLT.

Books: ask the child to find things relating your target concept word e.g. ‘Can you find *all* of the birds?’ ‘Which room has the *most* people in?’

Turn Taking Games: suitable for the concept you are working on e.g. playing ‘Snap’ and talking about similarities and differences, Pop Up Pirate to reinforce *in*.

Visual Supports: Show a picture card depicting a target concept and give a verbal direction (e.g., “Put *lots* of beads on the tree,” “Put *one* star on top,” or “Get *all* the popsicle sticks and line them up”). Then show the card to see if it matches.

Can You Find?: Go around the room looking for items that fit the concept.

Instructions: initially use only one key-word, taking one object and vary the concept that the child needs to understand to follow your instruction. You can use any of the activities listed above to take turns to give instructions e.g. using a dollhouse and a figure give the instruction “Put the person *under* the bed”, “Put the person *on* the chair”. Note: Time and Sequence concepts are hard because the order we need to do things in is affected by the sentence structure we use. Start with easier sentences where the child is expected to point to the items in the order said e.g. “point to the cat *before* you point to the fish”

## **Stage 3 - add more information**

Two & Three word level Instructions: extend your instructions by having a single concept but a range of objects use e.g. Silly animals: Put out some coloured bricks and give the child a collection of farm animals – “Put the cow *on* the red brick”

Barrier Games: Two players sit across from each other with a barrier between them. Each player is given the same scene and pieces to go with that scene. Take turns to give instructions containing your target concept word/s to place or draw items on a toy or picture scene. Check you have matching scenes at the end.

## **Stage 4 – generalise to different situations**

Expand what the child says: with a concept word to describes what the child is talking about e.g. if he says: ‘bus’ when looking at a picture, you could say to him, “Yes, it’s a *big* bus!”

Conversation: Use your target concept word/s in your everyday conversation and situations with the child and model when they could use them too e.g. “we’re going to the shops *before* we go to the park” “we’re going to feed the ducks *after* we’ve posted the letters”.

Stories: introduce the idea of “*what happened before ...*” “*what next ...*” “*what happened after ...*”

Talk about what’s happening: in the classroom or at home e.g. ‘John has more pencils.’ ‘Sam is the *first* in line’. Talk about days of the week, use a visual timetable

Instructions: Give instructions using the new concepts ‘Can you bring me *all* the rulers?’, ‘Put away *all* the red bricks’.

Reading: Continue to reinforce the new concept in lots of different stories and books.

## **Stage 5 - help the child compare concepts**

Sorting by Concept: Sort the objects into 2 or more opposing concepts. Practice sorting samples of the same objects. Slowly add more varied objects. Or use a feely bag and let the child pull one object out at a time and sort into piles based on the opposite pairs.

Craft: Draw pictures of items with opposing concepts e.g. long and short trains etc. (or trains, etc.) for the child to colour in. Draw two faces and cut some long and short strands of wool for hair.

Books: compare opposing concepts in books and stories.

Treasure Hunt: Find a range of toys, for example: one big cup and one little cup, one big plate and one little plate, or spoon, or car, etc. Ask the child, “Find the *big* car.” “Find the *little* spoon.”