

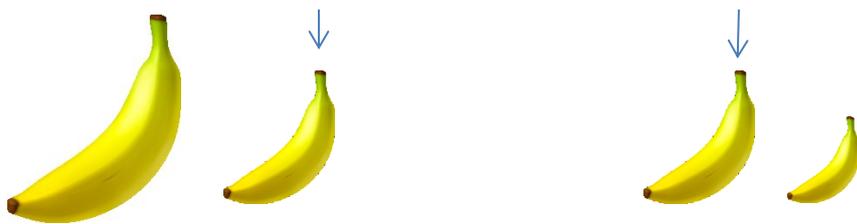
How to...

Support a child's understanding and use of concept words

Concepts are words which describe something, tell us about location or time, or about feelings.

A child needs to understand a range of basic concepts to help them with understanding the world around them, and to help them to understand spoken language in the classroom. Understanding of basic concepts is key to many areas of the school curriculum e.g. maths and science.

These words can be more difficult for a child to learn, as they are more abstract than nouns and verbs; some words like 'fast and slow' are very difficult to show in pictures. Concepts are often relative e.g. the same banana could be described as the "Small banana" and then the "Big banana" depending on the other options available.



Which concepts should I teach?

Children start to learn the earliest concepts at between 2 and 3 years of age – these are words like 'big' and 'little', 'more', some simple colours and 'in', 'on' and 'under'. You might start by teaching some of these concepts.

Once the child has an understanding of these concepts, you might move on to concepts like:

hot/cold	fast/slow	next to, in the middle
Up/down	wet/dry	noisy/quiet
Behind, in front	first/last	long/short
Same/different	hard/soft	heavy/light

Choose concepts which relate to everyday activities, the child's play, and classroom topics e.g. if you are learning about transport, you might teach concepts 'fast' and 'slow' to support the child's understanding of the topic.

Some concepts like 'before' and 'after' are very abstract, so these may develop later.

How should I teach concepts?

- Introduce one concept at a time. If the child is working on opposites e.g. **big** and **little** start with one concept (**big**) before introducing the contrast (**little**)
- It is useful if parents and nursery/school can work on the same concept
- Introduce new concepts using a range of different activities to support the child's understanding. Use real life situations where possible to support their understanding e.g. if you are working on the concept '**wet**', you might use this word when the child is washing their hands, during water play, and when they are splashing in puddles at the weekend
- Use gesture to support the child's understanding e.g. use your hands to show 'big' or 'under'. You can also use Makaton signs alongside the words if you know them
- Children will understand words before they can use them – work on developing the child's understanding of concept words, before you expect them to use them independently
- Teach concepts using concrete items first e.g. if you are working on the concept **more**, teach this with a physical pile of objects, before relating it to more abstract things like numbers

Additional information:

For further information please contact Paediatric.services@acecic.nhs.uk or call ACE paediatric services on 01206 588100

Additional resources:

<https://www.talkingpoint.org.uk>

<https://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/wellcomm/>

<https://www.elklan.co.uk/under-5s/early-language-builders>

<https://www.blacksheepress.co.uk/product/sentence-builder-expressive-skills/>

See the following table for guidance on specific resources to target individual concepts – pre-schools, nurseries and schools may already have these resources

Concept	Resource
Concepts of size—big/little, long/short, thick/thin, tall/short, empty/full, heavy/light, fat/thin	PORIC Concepts in developmental levels (worksheets for concepts below) Big/little—BlackSheep Press Barrier Concepts pages 36-37, 48-49, BlackSheep Press Big/Small Heavy/light—Blacksheep Press Long/short—BlackSheep Press
Concepts of space - in/on/under/in front of/behind/ in-between/ next to/ above/ below, forward/backward, up/down, top/bottom	BlackSheep Press Prepositions
Concepts of time—before/after, always/never, early/late, yesterday/tomorrow/today	Time—BlackSheep Press Before/After—BlackSheep Press Now/soon/early/late—BlackSheep Press Days—BlackSheep Press
Concepts of number—first/next/last	First/Next/Last—BlackSheep Press 2&3 part sequences—BlackSheep Press
Concepts of quality—same/different, new/old	Same/Different—BlackSheep Press
Colour	Wellcomm Big Book of Ideas—Section 5.4 and 4E BlackSheep Press Barrier Concepts pages 20-22
Concepts of texture—hard/soft, hot/cold, dry/wet, smooth/rough	BlackSheep Press Hot/Cold
Concepts of sound—loud, soft, noisy, quiet	Ultimate guide to Phonological Awareness
Shapes	BlackSheep Press Barrier Concepts pages 20-22
Personal quality—old/young, happy/sad, new/old	BlackSheep Press Emotions Age—BlackSheep Press (old/new, oldest/youngest etc)
Concepts of quantity—all/none, more/less, some/a lot, all/except	More than/less than—BlackSheep Press All/except — BlackSheep Press