



Language: English

## Activities for expanding and consolidating children's vocabulary.

### Word banks

These work best if they are constructed as living banks/lists i.e. where the children actually find synonyms etc from their reading books/library books etc.

Suggested themes for word banks would include Said, nice/good, then, fine weather, bad weather, food descriptions, smells, personalities, physical appearance etc. There are numerous possibilities.

### Class scrapbook

Keep a scrapbook or notebook where children can transcribe well written sentences or story starters from their readers or library books.

### Chain writing

This is the name given to the gradual expansion of a sentence.

1. Select a word related to the theme you are developing e.g. spiders.
2. Ask the children to suggest words which describe spiders e.g.

Hairy

Scary

Black

Sneaky

Horrible

Long-legged

Spiders

3. Then ask what spiders do and add the words to the list e.g.

*Hairy*

*Scary*

*Black*

*Sneaky*

*Horrible*

*Long-legged*

*Spiders*

*climb*

*hide*

*lurk*

*creep*

*bite*

*sleep*

4. Now combine the words to make sentences such as  
Hairy spiders creep.  
Scary spiders lurk.



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5. Next, list where spiders do things and add these to the list:

<i>Hairy</i>		<i>climb</i>	<i>in the bathroom</i>
<i>Scary</i>		<i>hide</i>	<i>in the garden</i>
<i>Black</i>		<i>lurk</i>	<i>under the wood pile</i>
<i>Sneaky</i>	<i>spiders</i>	<i>creep</i>	<i>inside the light shade</i>
<i>Horrible</i>		<i>bite</i>	<i>in their webs</i>

And combine as before to make different sentences e.g.

Long-legged spiders sleep in the bathroom.

Scary spiders lurk inside the light shade.

String poems or Noun Describers

Decide on a topic e.g puppies

Ask children to think of adjectives describing puppies and then slot them into the poem format

Puppies  
Puppies puppies puppies  
Cute cuddly crazy puppies  
Fat fluffy friendly puppies  
Bounding, bounding, biting puppies  
Snapping, yapping, barking puppies,  
Hungry, thirsty, panting puppies  
Puppies, puppies, puppies.

If you want to challenge more able children insist that they use alliterative adjectives.

For a real challenge, tell them that the first adjective in every line must have 1 syllable, the second 2, the third 3 syllables.

This exercise is great for practising dictionary skills or using a class alphabetic word bank.

Multiple meanings

Compile charts with the children using words with more than one meaning e.g. Bank

Money bank, a river bank, a bank of clouds, the aeroplane banked suddenly, a blood bank, cars banked up at traffic lights, to bank on someone.



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### Key Words

If you are reading a factual text with children get them to identify the key words and compile a word bank. (Key words generally tell who, what, where, when, how, why)

E.g. Text: Spiders

There are many varieties of spiders in Europe. Spiders belong to the group called Anthropods. They have two body parts. They have eight legs which end in claws. Spiders also have fangs which are used to seize prey, Some spiders are poisonous.

### Possible key words

Many varieties

Europe

Anthropods

Two body parts

Eight legs

Fangs

Some poisonous

### Twenty ( or Ten!) Questions

Play this game with words from a specific list (e.g. a topic list for spiders, weave, web, poisonous, harmless, egg-sac)

Children will have to be taught the kinds of questions to ask e.g

Is it a noun/verb/adjective/adverb/compound noun?

Has it a suffix/prefix?

Has it one syllable (2,3,4)?

Is it a verb in the past tense?

Is it a proper noun?

Other activities to reinforce vocabulary could include Hangman, Word searches, anagrams etc.

### Cloze

The simplicity of cloze is almost as great as its value.

Try the following.

- Delete all the synonyms for *said* in a passage

or.

- Delete all the verbs.
- For able children who need a challenge – delete pronouns or punctuation.
- Delete rhyming words in a poem



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### Crazy Cloze

By deleting all on one particular part of speech in a piece of text and asking the children to replace the words without seeing the text, a humorous, if non-sensical text will result.

Ask the children to list 10 adjectives of any sort on a piece of paper e.g juicy, plastic,

Circular, delicious, well-mannered, ugly, floral, cold, satisfying, sad, disgusting.

Once this has been done, give them a passage that has the adjectives deleted.

*The Galway United players were nothing short of \_\_\_\_\_ as they steamrolled a \_\_\_\_\_ Sligo side at the FIFA grounds last night. Starting the match without their \_\_\_\_\_ star player, the Galway men took some time to become accustomed to the \_\_\_\_\_ conditions before \_\_\_\_\_ full-forward, Niall Brown took a \_\_\_\_\_ shot in the square and kicked a \_\_\_\_\_ goal. Later in this \_\_\_\_\_ game, the ball became \_\_\_\_\_ and by half time the crowd was \_\_\_\_\_.*

Insert the invented adjectives and read aloud. Although the results will be predictably hilarious, the children are quick to spot any mismatch in sentence structure. This is an opportune time to redefine the term 'adjective' and clear up any misunderstandings.

### Semantic grid

The semantic grid is a versatile reading comprehension activity with potential for revision of vocabulary and also of parts of speech. For example, having read a text on health the children could be asked using their own knowledge and the information provided by the text, to complete the grid below. First correct entry wins

	H	E	A	L	T	H
Noun	heart			lungs		
Verb		eat			train	
Adjective			active			healthy

Be sure to discuss the fact that one word may fall into more than one category e.g no added sugar (adjective). He added sugar (verb)

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