

Speech & language
therapy

Developing concepts

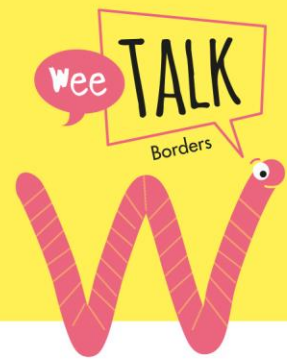
Linguistic concepts are relational words which describe **attributes** - e.g. colour, size, texture and shape, **time** - e.g. yesterday, before, first or **position** - e.g. over, top, middle.

Many children with language problems find concepts difficult to remember because they are often abstract i.e. you can't see them. Another reason why they are difficult to remember is that the meaning of the words change depending on the situation in which they are used, e.g. a dog is big when compared to a mouse but not when compared to a horse.

This pack will give you some suggestions of strategies to try and some specific concepts to work on.

General strategies

- Work on **one** concept at a time.
- Children with language difficulties often struggle with opposites so it may not be helpful, to start with, to teach comparisons, e.g. 'heavy' versus 'light'. When starting to teach the concept 'heavy' to your child, describe something heavy, like a brick, as 'heavy' and something light, like a feather, as 'not heavy'.
- Once opposites have been taught separately (as above), then help your child to compare the concepts, for example 'hard' versus 'soft'. So, when your child has experienced lots of 'hard things' and then lots of 'soft things', play a sorting game that compares hard and soft objects.
- If a concept has several meanings, e.g. 'light' can mean 'light' in weight but also 'light' in colour, choose **one** meaning to work on first.
- As concepts can be abstract try to use real objects, where possible, for your child to hold, see and feel to help them to remember the concept word. If you don't have the real object, pictures would also be useful for your child to see.
- Your child may understand a concept in one situation but may not be able to transfer this knowledge to other situations, e.g. they may think of **inside** as only being indoors and not be aware of the concept that objects can be inside something else. Your child may need help to learn the concept in each situation.



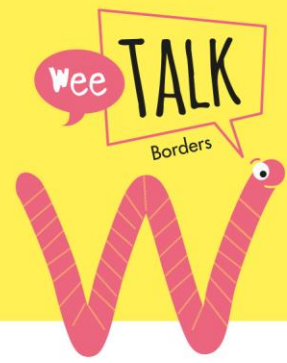
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- Your speech and language therapist may have chosen specific concepts for you to start working on with your child. Try to set up situations where your child is exposed to these concepts in everyday family life. Point out the concepts to your child and emphasise the words as you say them, e.g. 'your socks are the **same**. My socks are not the same. My socks are **different**'.
- If your speech and language therapist has given you 'packs' of pictures to help develop your child's understanding of concepts, set aside some time to do this work on a daily basis. Try to aim for 10 minutes a day. Turn off the television or any other background noise. If you have other children in the family either go to a separate room to focus your attention solely on your child or include the other children in the activity.
- If your child says the wrong word, e.g. if they describe a scarf as being 'tall' rather than long, model the correct word for them, e.g. 'Oh I think that scarf is a **long** scarf'.
- Rather than asking your child questions (to test if they know the concept word) try to leave gaps for them to fill in, e.g. 'This ball is **big** and this one is.....' This allows your child to add 'small' if they know the word. If, after a few seconds, your child has not said anything then say the word for them.

Activities and games to play

It is not possible to suggest activity ideas for all the concept words in this pack. Here are some suggestions for developing some early concept words.

- **Same/Different** - When sorting through your washing basket, you could do a sorting activity of tops that are the same (e.g. school t-shirts and socks) and those that are different etc. This can be applied to objects in every room of your home, e.g. cushions that are the same/different, cups, plates and cutlery that are the same/different. Model the language as you do the sorting activity, e.g. 'Look, your pen is the **same** as my pen'.
- **Long/Short** - For these concepts you could play a hunting game round your house to find objects that are long or short, e.g. socks, scarves, hair length, skirts, pencils, pieces of string, shopping lists or till receipts. Make sure you model the language as you play the hunting game, e.g. 'I've found a **long** sock' or 'here's a **short** pencil'.



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- **Hot/Cold** - For these concepts, you have probably focused on 'hot' without knowing it, for example warning your child not to touch the cooker, the radiator, the kettle, the hot tap etc because they are all hot. Without touching any of the extremely hot things, you could be a 'hot' or 'cold' detective and go round your house making a list of things that are 'hot' or 'cold'. Make sure you model the language as you play the detective game, e.g. 'the freezer is really **cold**'.
- **Full/Empty** - You could talk about these concepts at snack or meal times. Let your child watch you, or supervise them pouring out drinks for the family and talk about the cups or glasses being full, e.g. 'this glass is **full** of juice'. You could do this with food on plates or bowls, e.g. 'this bowl is **full** of porridge'. Once you have eaten your meal or snack you can talk about things being empty, e.g. 'Let's have a look in your bowl. Oh, your bowl is **empty**. There are no grapes left' etc.
- **In/On/Under** - Take **one** preposition at a time, e.g. 'in'. Have a range of items that you want your child to hide, as well as somewhere for them to put the items in, e.g. a box. Give your child an instruction such as 'put the car **in** the box'. Build up to having a few hiding places, e.g. a box, a large bowl and a welly boot so that your child has a choice of where to hide things. Point out things that are **in** other things around your house, e.g. 'Look the duck is **in** the bath', 'the dishes are **in** the sink', 'the car is **in** the garage' etc. When you feel that your child has understood the preposition you're focusing on, then move onto the next one.

Useful resources

With concept development, there is no need to buy any special equipment. You should already have everything you need in your home - you just need to point it out to your child and emphasise the words.

For more information on the Speech and Language Therapy Service (including how to request support from us) please see: <http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/slt>
[Check out our Wee Talk Borders Facebook page or you can call us on 01896 826710](#)