



Growing Your Child's Vocabulary

Simple daily habits that build word knowledge

Audience: Parents & Caregivers

Based on professional development by Dr. Chase Young | LiTerrific.com

Why Vocabulary Matters So Much

Vocabulary is one of the strongest predictors of reading success. By the time children reach 3rd grade, their understanding of word meanings becomes the primary driver of reading comprehension. The good news: vocabulary grows naturally through conversation, reading, and play.

The Numbers

- A child needs to learn about **5 new words per day** from age 18 months to have ~8,000 words by age 6
- The average high school graduate knows about **40,000 words**
- Between grades 3-12, children learn about **3,000 words per year** (8+ per day)
- Most of these words are learned through reading and conversation, not flashcards

Daily Habits That Work

Use Big Words Naturally

Don't dumb down your vocabulary. If you'd say *exhausted* to an adult, say it to your child. Then add: "That means really, really tired." Children need to hear sophisticated words in natural contexts.

Read Widely

The more genres and topics your child reads (or is read to), the more words they encounter. Mix in nonfiction, poetry, graphic novels, and magazines alongside chapter books.

Play With Words

Try these at home:

- **Synonym Swap:** Replace a common word with a fancier one. Instead of "big" try "enormous" or "colossal"
- **Word of the Day:** Introduce a new word at breakfast and see who can use it naturally the most times that day
- **"What's Another Word For...?"** Play this in the car, at dinner, or walking the dog
- **Meme Game:** Describe a meme using only fancy vocabulary words

Explain, Don't Just Define

Dictionary definitions confuse most kids. Instead, use kid-friendly language: "*Hesitant* means when you're not sure if you want to do something, like when you stand at the edge of the pool thinking about whether to jump in."



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