

## 8.1 Learning the meaning of 'when'



### Why is this important?

Wh- questions are an integral part of everyday conversations and routines. Children need to understand these structures to be able to respond appropriately. 'When' is probably the hardest of the question words because time generally can be a challenging concept for children to grasp.



### What to do

- Share a simple activity book, experience book or child's reading book.
- Using the story/pictures, ask questions relating to 'when' particular things happen:
  - ★ 'When do we have a bath?'
  - ★ 'When do we put up an umbrella?'
  - ★ 'When do we need a plaster?'
  - ★ 'When do we put the lights on?'
  - ★ 'When does a cat miaow?'
- Encourage appropriate responses. Use sentence completion if the child finds the activity difficult, e.g.
  - ★ Adult: 'When do we put the lights on?'
  - ★ Child: No response.
  - ★ Adult: 'We put the lights on when it's ...' (pause).
  - ★ Child: 'Night time.'

## 8.2 Understanding that things that go

together are not always the same



### Why is this important?

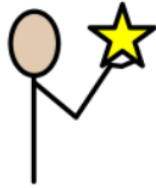
Children need to learn how words relate to each other but also how they differ from other words (e.g. an apple and carrot are both foods but apples are fruits whereas carrots are vegetables). This helps to build semantics (word meaning) and expands vocabulary.



### What to do

- Gather together some pictures of items in a particular category (e.g. food). Use magazines, supermarket promotional leaflets, cut the labels off tins, packets and jars or draw some foods, to get a range of items.
- Using a scrapbook, exercise book or plain paper, think about how the food items could be divided further, e.g.
  - ★ Fruits vs. vegetables.
  - ★ Hot vs. cold foods.
  - ★ Things eaten for breakfast/lunch/dinner/tea.
  - ★ Hard vs. soft foods.
- Choose two groups (e.g. hot vs. cold foods). Stick all the hot foods on one page and the cold foods on another. Talk about the foods together.

### 8.3 Learning the meaning of 'after'



#### Why is this important?

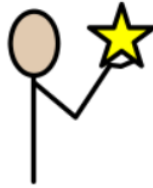
'After' relates to something happening or occurring later than something else (e.g. put your shoes on after your coat; number ten comes after number nine). This is a key concept when learning ordering and sequencing skills and also in relation to time.



#### What to do

- Gather together some pictures of children carrying out two different actions (e.g. eating dinner and riding a bike).
- Ask the child to put the activities in order. Link the two pictures (e.g. 'Mimi can ride her bike after she's eaten her dinner').
- Ask what Mimi has to do first. This requires the child to understand that the second part of the instruction has to be performed first.

## 8.4 Understanding post-modified sentences



### Why is this important?

Understanding these more complex sentences enables children to process more complex instructions by building up their knowledge of the grammatical system and the unspoken rules that govern it. It also helps children to be able to relate back a new piece of information to something they already know.

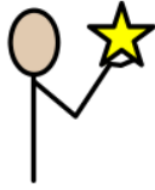


### What to do

- Gather together some toys, e.g.
  - ★ Big and little ducks (or other favourite toys).
- ★ Some big and little objects (e.g. cup/chair/bed).
  - Give the child an instruction:
    - ★ 'The duck sitting on the bed is little.'
    - ★ 'The duck holding the cup is big.'
    - ★ 'The duck standing on the chair is big.'

N.B. You will need 'big' and 'little' objects as well as ducks because the child may process the last part of the sentence as 'the bed is little' rather than 'the duck is little'.

## 8.5 Understanding sentences containing 'either' and 'or'



### Why is this important?

'Either' and 'or' constructions are an integral part of making choices or decisions/used frequently in everyday situations (e.g. in school, the teacher may say 'You can either play with the sand or the water'; at home, mum may say 'You can either have milk or juice'). The more this can be emphasised in everyday life, the better.



### What to do

- Gather together a selection of toys or pictures.
  - Ask the child to point to something, e.g.
    - ★ 'Point to either teddy or monkey.'
    - ★ 'Point to either the slide or the swing.'
    - ★ 'Give the cup to either the girl or the boy.'

## 8.6 Using an increasing range of prepositions: 'behind', 'in front', 'next to' and 'between'



### Why is this important?

Prepositions are used to describe the placement of objects or people. They help children describe the world around them.



### What to do

- Place several toys around the room – put them 'behind', 'in front', 'next to' and 'between' other things.
  - As the child locates a toy, ask:
    - ★ 'Where is monkey?'
    - If the child gets it right, reinforce by repeating back straightaway:
      - ★ 'Well done! Monkey is next to the lamp!' and move on to find the next toy.
    - If the child doesn't respond or responds incorrectly, offer a choice, e.g.
      - ★ 'Is [the] monkey under the cup or behind the cup?'
    - If the child is still finding the task difficult, model the correct answer, e.g.
      - ★ Adult – 'Where's [the] monkey hiding? He's hiding behind the cup.  
Where's [the] monkey hiding?'
      - ★ Child – 'Behind.'
      - ★ Adult – 'Well done, behind the cup.'

## 8.7 Understanding emotions from facial expressions



### Why is this important?

Facial expressions are the way we understand how others feel. They communicate essential information to the listener and are a fundamental part of social understanding. Being able to read and describe emotions in others helps in the development of emotional intelligence.



### What to do

- Collect together pictures from catalogues/magazines or photographs of faces showing emotions (e.g. a baby crying, a scared child, a happy clown, a surprised lady).
  - Put out the pictures and talk about the different emotions, e.g.
- ★ 'Look, the girl is scared. What could she be scared of? Maybe a big dog or a ride at the fair?'
  - Demonstrate a 'scared' face and ask the child to copy.
- Try this for all four emotions – 'happy', 'sad', 'scared', 'surprised'.
  - Put out the four pictures and ask the child to point to:
    - ★ 'Who's surprised?'
    - ★ 'Who's happy?'
- As you share books, talk about how people are feeling and why.

## 8.8 Understanding question words using stories



### Why is this important?

Children need to be able to process a variety of question words in a range of different situations. Questions are a way of finding out what children know/can remember about an activity/event, etc. and also a means of encouraging reflection and thinking skills.



### What to do

- Read a simple story together. Choose favourite books, about animals perhaps, or favourite characters (e.g. 'Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs').\*
- Ask questions about the story (e.g. for 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves', ask:
  - ★ 'Where did the dwarves go to work?'
  - ★ 'What were the dwarves digging for?'
  - ★ 'Why did Snow White go to sleep?'
  - ★ 'Who gave Snow White the poisonous apple?'
- ★ 'How did the dwarves feel when Snow White went to sleep?')
  - If the child doesn't answer or answers inappropriately, try:
- ★ Offering a choice of answers (e.g. 'Where did the dwarves go to work? Was it in a shop or down the mine?').
- ★ Re-read part of the story where the answer is and then repeat the question.



## 8.9 Learning to remember and then say five things



### Why is this important?

Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. If, for example, a four- or five-word instruction is given (e.g. 'Wash doll's face and hands'), the child has to remember 'wash', 'doll', 'face' and 'hands'. Auditory memory is also a factor in being able to process longer instructions.



### What to do

- Gather together a selection of pictures showing familiar actions. These could be cards or cut out from magazines.
  - Place a few of the cards (e.g. six) facedown on the table.
    - Choose a card but don't show it to the child.
    - Look at the card and make a sentence about the picture (e.g. card shows 'cat chasing mouse' – you say 'cats like to chase mice').
      - Ask the child 'Can you remember what I said?'
  - If the child responds correctly, show the card and reinforce by repeating the child's efforts straightaway.
  - If it is difficult or only one or two words are recalled (e.g. 'cats chase mice'), repeat the sentence emphasising the missed words (e.g. 'cats like to chase mice').
    - Take it in turns to copy each other's sentence.

## 8.10 Using superlatives: 'biggest' and 'tallest'



### Why is this important?

The superlative is the form of the adjective or adverb that expresses 'most'. The superlative indicates that something has some feature to a 'greater' or 'lesser' degree than anything it is being compared with in a given context (e.g. if shown trains of three different lengths – one will be the longest and one will be the shortest). The grammatical marker 'est' is used most commonly.



### What to do

- Gather together groups of objects (e.g. toys which vary in size). You will need at least three of each object – one small, one medium and one large, e.g.
    - ★ Small, medium and large cups
    - ★ Small, medium and large pencils
    - ★ Small, medium and large dolls
  - Put out a set of three items (e.g. the three cups).
    - Point to each corresponding cup in turn, saying:
      - ★ 'This cup is small, this cup is big and this cup is the...'
  - Can the child fill in the gap and say 'biggest' when you pause?
    - Now starting with the biggest cup say:
      - ★ 'This cup is big, this cup is smaller and this cup is the ...'
    - Continue with the other sets of items
- the pencils can be 'short'/'long', the dolls can be 'short'/'tall', etc.