

## 7.1 Role play



### Why is this important?

Role play is how children learn to 'act out' situations or events that are not in the present. They use knowledge of their own experiences to pretend to be someone else (e.g. nurse, mummy, teacher, bus or train driver, shopkeeper) and also act the part of roles from books, television programmes, etc.



### What to do

- Gather together some clothes for dressing up. Hats, gloves, bags and other accessories are especially useful.
- Encourage the child to dress up and pretend to be someone different (e.g. nurse, doctor, vet, policeman, teacher, spaceman, cowboy, train driver, or perhaps an animal).
- Help the child get into the game by looking at books which have a story, or pictures about a particular character.
- Make the pretend environment together (e.g. in the shop, use empty packets and boxes and pretend money, purses and bags; make food items from play-dough or draw and cut them out).
  - Useful books might be about familiar fairy stories or those which relate to real-life experiences (e.g. shopping, a trip to a café, the dentist).

## 7.2 Understanding 'many' and 'few'



### Why is this important?

These kinds of concepts can be tricky to learn, because there is no fixed quantity associated with them (e.g. a 'few' leaves on a tree may relate to a hundred leaves, whereas a 'few' biscuits left on a plate may only be three). These concepts/words are abstract – they can't be seen or touched in the same way as a concrete object like a fork can.



### What to do

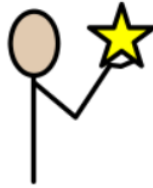
- Draw a scene on a big piece of paper or photocopy one out of a book (e.g. a playground/park/classroom/street/ room of house).
- Think of things that belong in the scene (e.g. if your scene is the park, you might include trees, ducks, swings, flowers, children, bikes).
- Create cards to depict 'many' and 'few' of each of the objects (e.g. 'many' trees on one piece of card and a 'few' trees on another).
  - Put out the scene with the two matching objects and ask the child to:
    - ★ 'Put many trees in the park.'
  - Can the child choose the correct picture and place it on the big picture?
- Continue presenting extra cards as you would in a matching game, putting 'many' with 'many' and 'few' with 'few'. N.B. You could use Blu-Tack to stick the smaller pictures on.
  - Do the same for the other pairs of objects (e.g. 'many'/'few' ducks).

Another good game to play is 'build a monster'.

Grab a piece of paper, a pencil and a dice.

Roll a 1, draw a head, roll a 2, draw an eye, roll a 3, draw a mouth, roll a 4, draw a nose, roll a 5, draw an arm and roll a 6, draw a leg. Discuss with your child what the monster has many of, arms, fingers, legs, toes etc and what he's only got a few of, eyes, heads etc.

### 7.3 Understanding 'long' and 'short'



#### **Why is this important?**

Concepts such as 'long'/'short' and 'big'/'little' are used to describe what something looks like and how things are different from each other (e.g. a pencil could be 'long'/'short'/'fat'/'thin'/'big'/'little').

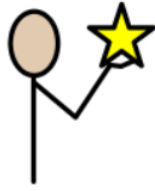


#### **What to do**

- Gather together pairs of things that can be described as 'long' and 'short' (e.g. pencils, dolls with 'long' and 'short' hair, rulers, trousers, scarves, snakes).
- Put out one of the pairs (e.g. the 'long' and the 'short' pencil).
  - Ask the child to find the 'long' pencil, etc.
  - The child could post the object in a box or put it in a bag.

You could also go for a walk around a park and collect different sized sticks and compare the sizes, which is long and which is short.

## 7.4 Learning the meaning of 'why'



### Why is this important?

'Why' questions help to develop causal relations, that is something happened because of something else (e.g. the boy is crying because he fell off his bike). As verbal reasoning skills develop, children learn that 'why' questions can probe increasingly more abstract concepts.



### What to do

- Collect some simple action pictures that illustrate 'cause and effect' activities.
  - Use 'why' as you ask the child about the pictures, e.g.
    - ★ 'Why has the man got his umbrella?'
      - 'Because it's raining.'
    - ★ 'Why is the girl running?'
      - 'Because she's trying to catch the bus.'
    - ★ 'Why can't the boy reach the cake?'
      - 'Because he's too small.'
- ★ Include questions here about feelings/emotions that the child can relate to his/her own experience (e.g. 'Why can't the boy reach the cake? Because he's too small. How does he feel?').
  - Encourage sentence completion (e.g. 'Why has the man got his umbrella? Because ...').
  - If this doesn't do the trick, model the right response.

## 7.5 Understanding 'first' and 'last'



### Why is this important?

'First' and 'last' are concepts of time: they refer to something happening before or after something else. They are also significant 'order' concepts when creating sequence in numeracy.



### What to do

- It is useful to do this activity with a group of children of mixed ability, so that children who have already acquired these concepts can act as models for those who are still learning.
  - Get the group to line up, then ask the child to stand 'first' or 'last' in the line.
    - If the child is unsure, show him/her where to stand.
- Once you have given the instruction and the child has moved to the right place in the line, reinforce this by saying where the child is (e.g. 'Yes, now you are first').

## 7.6 Understanding and using four-word sentences



### Why is this important?

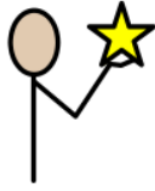
As language develops, children need to understand increasingly more complex instructions and use longer sentences to describe and explain. This helps expand vocabulary and link words together using 'a' and 'the' as sentences become more like the mature adult form.



### What to do

- Ask the child to find two favourite toys (e.g. Spiderman and Batman, Fifi and Dora).
  - Find a toy table and chair (or use a real one if necessary).
- Explain that the toys are being naughty by hiding all over the place. Tell the child where to put them – try to make this as fun and outrageous as you can!
- The child will need to understand four different parts of the sentence to get the instruction correct:
  - ★ Person (Spiderman or Batman) ★ Action ('jump'/'sit'/'stand'/'lie')
  - ★ Preposition ('on'/'under') ★ Place ('table'/'chair')
- Ask the child to:
  - ★ 'Make Fifi sit under the chair.' ★ 'Make Batman jump on the table.'
  - ★ 'Make Dora lie under the table.'
- If a child gets part of the instruction wrong, repeat the instruction emphasising the key words where the correction needs to be made (e.g. if the child places the toy 'on' the table instead of 'under', you would say 'Dora's lying on the table. Make Dora lie under the table.' If the child doesn't correct the error, move the toy to the right place and then repeat the instruction.
- When the child has put the toy in the right place, ask 'What did you do?' Encourage all four keys words to describe the placement of the toy.

## 7.7 Using comparatives: 'bigger', 'longer' and 'smaller'



### Why is this important?

Comparatives relate to the 'er' on the end of an adjective and are the grammatical form used to express that there is 'more' of something (e.g. 'more big' or 'more small' – although this is not how it is expressed in English). This signals further development of abstract concepts – those where a judgement has to be made.



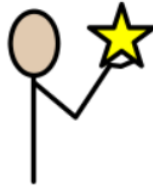
### What to do

- Gather together some items/toys that vary in size (e.g. two sizes of teddy, cups, pencils, books, cars).
  - Put out two of the objects (e.g. two sizes of car).
- Point to the 'smaller' of the two objects first and then point to the 'bigger' one saying 'This car is big and this car is ...'
  - Encourage the child to use the comparative 'bigger'.
- If the child says 'more big', explain that there is a special way of saying 'more big', e.g.
  - ★ Adult: 'This teddy is big and this teddy is ... .'
  - ★ Child: 'More big.'
  - ★ Adult: 'Yes, more big, this teddy is bigger. Now you try. This teddy is ... .'
  - ★ Child: 'Bigger.'

Here is a list of objects you could use for this activity. Ask the children what is happening to these objects.

- Blow up a balloon
- Build a Lego Tower
  - Russian Dolls
  - Stretchy Toy
  - Elastic Bands
    - Slinky
- Rainbow Stacker
- Stacking Cups

## 7.8 Understanding opposites: 'wet'/'dry'



### Why is this important?

Opposites are used to describe concepts (e.g. an oven is 'hot', a fridge is 'cold') whilst recognising that other words (e.g. 'warm', 'tepid', 'lukewarm') represent various positions on the continuum between these two poles. These linguistic concepts are important in developing cognitive skills too.

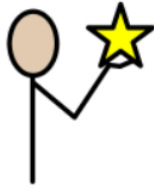


### What to do

- Start by introducing one of the pair of concepts (e.g. 'wet').
- Take a trip round the house, park or school, talking about things that are wet (e.g. washing, rain, puddles, tap, hose, drinks, paint).
- Feel and talk about what 'wet' is like (e.g. wash your hands, jump in puddles, make hand-prints with wet paint).
- Think of 'wet' things with the child and draw them on a piece of paper. Make a collage of 'wet' things by printing/ cutting out and sticking pictures.
- When the child is familiar with the word and concept 'wet', move on to learn 'dry', going through the same activities. Once 'wet' and 'dry' have been learnt individually, talk about them together (e.g. put the 'wet' washing on the line and it will 'dry'; wash your hands and then 'dry' them).



## 7.9 Understanding and using pronouns: 'his' and 'her'



### Why is this important?

'His' and 'her' are used to signal that something belongs or relates to a man/lady, boy/girl (or male/female animal) previously identified in a sentence (e.g. the boy wears 'his' shoes, the girl likes 'her' new bike).



### What to do

- Find a catalogue or magazine and cut out a picture of a boy and girl – there are also many commercial products available.
- Cut out lots of pictures of clothes and toys. Try to find similar items (e.g. a girl's coat and a boy's coat; a bike for the girl and one for the boy).
  - Divide the clothes and toys between the boy and the girl. Ask the child to find:
    - ★ 'His hat.'
    - ★ 'Her shoes.'
    - ★ 'Her bike.'
  - If the child chooses the wrong picture:
    - ★ Praise the child: 'Good try.'
    - ★ Repeat the question emphasising the pronoun: 'You've found the girl's bike, that's her bike; can you find his bike?'
  - ★ If there is no spontaneous correction, guide the child's hand to the right picture repeating the pronoun: 'This is the boy's bike, it's his bike.'
- When the child is consistently choosing the right person/picture, reverse the roles so that the child is asking you to find 'his coat', etc.

## 7.10 Linking sentences using 'because'



### Why is this important?

'Because' is one of a range of words used to expand sentences by adding information, and in this case, justifying ideas/thoughts/decisions. By using words like 'because' (e.g. 'then', 'after', 'that') children are able to expand their grammatical skills too.



### What to do

- Gather some things together, show them to the child and then put them in a bag. Ask the child to delve into the bag and guess what he/she can feel. Encourage the child to say why he/she thinks it's the car/cup, etc.
  - ★ 'I think it's a car because it's got wheels.'
  - ★ 'I think it's a cup because it's got a handle.'
- If the child starts the sentence with 'because', prompt him/her to use the first part by starting it for him/her:
  - ★ Child puts hand in bag and knows it's a cup.
    - ★ Child: 'Cup.'
  - ★ Adult pauses to wait for further explanation. No response so asks 'Why do you think it's a cup?'
    - ★ Child: 'Because it's got a handle.'
  - ★ Adult models first part of sentence (e.g. 'I think it's a cup ... [pauses]').
    - ★ Child completes sentence '... a cup because its got a handle.'
- Set up some simple scenes which will work with 'why ... because' structures:
  - ★ 'Why are we running? ... Because we want to catch the bus.'
  - ★ 'Why are we putting on coats? ... Because it's cold.'