

# Helping Your Child Build Vocabulary



## Tell Me a Story

Readers benefit from knowing many words. When a child is reading, being able to connect

the printed word to the spoken word is faster and more accurate when the word is in the child's speaking vocabulary. It's helpful for a child to have a big mental dictionary of words! This will help him understand what he is reading.

Storytelling is one way to help your child build vocabulary knowledge. It's a fun way to start a lively conversation, develop language skills, and help your child practice how to express his thoughts and feelings.

You might call this activity, "Tell Me a Story." Wordless picture books—yes, books without any words—are great to use with this activity. If you don't have a wordless picture book, you could use a picture that tells a story, like a photograph in the newspaper, or a book with just a few words. Finding or creating a story by describing what's happening in the pictures encourages your child to use her imagination.

Ask your child to tell you the story she sees in the pictures. Encourage and praise her for following a story structure that has a beginning,

middle and end. Support your child's use of descriptive and precise words. For example, she might describe the color and size of something, rather than just naming the object. Instead of saying, "The dog is black," it would be much more descriptive to say, "The curly-haired, black dog was so tiny he could fit in a picnic basket." She might tell you "how" and "why" something happened. Instead of saying, "The boy ran," she might say, "The boy ran quickly because the barking dog was chasing him."

Asking open-ended questions—that is, questions that require more than a yes or no answer—is a great way to get your child hooked into telling the story. You might ask, "What can you tell about the story from the first picture?" or "What is happening in this picture?" or "How do you think the people in this picture feel?" When you come to the last picture in the story, you might ask your child what he thinks will happen next.

Using wordless picture books can help your child develop important literacy skills, like figuring out the sequence or order in which things happen, seeing and talking about cause and effect, and figuring out what might be true based on the information given in the story. Identifying details and the main ideas of the story are important skills that can be strengthened, too.



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