

A Voracious Vocabulary

Use entertaining activities to foster an appetite for words, and your child will gobble them up. The result will be a strong vocabulary that he can use in—and out of—school. Here are ways to play with words together.



ACCUMULATION

(noun): a collection gathered little by little

Pass time in a waiting room by creating an *accumulation* of related words. Your youngster will have to think about each word's meaning to decide whether it fits into his collection.



Take turns choosing a category, such as travel, sports, or food. Then, each of you should pick up a magazine and race to see how many words you can find in 5 minutes that fit the category. If you're looking for words related to travel, your child might find *altitude*, *currency*, and *urban*, for example. Write your words on your paper. When time is up, read them aloud, and cross off any that the other person also chose.

The person with the most words that no one else got selects the next category.

RECOLLECT

(verb): to remember

Your child needs a sharp memory to *recollect* where each pair of antonyms (words with opposite meanings) is hidden in this game. And learning a word's antonym gives him another way to understand and remember what the first word means.

Together, use a thesaurus to find pairs of antonyms like *gigantic* and *miniature* or *concave* and *convex*. Write each word on a separate index card along with its definition.



Mix up the cards, and place them facedown in rows. Take turns turning over two cards. If you find a pair of antonyms, keep it, and turn over two more cards. If the words aren't opposites, put the cards back, and it's the next player's turn. Collect the most pairs to win.

My words

Want to motivate your child to investigate and remember new words? Have her create a personal dictionary to use during word games.

In a notebook, she can add an entry each time she learns a new word. Suggest that she include the word, its definition, and any drawings, synonyms, or notes that will help her remember it.

Words are everywhere! Here is a list of ways she might find them.

1. Notice words that opponents play during games.



2. Look up the answers to crossword clues she doesn't know.
3. Get a word-a-day calendar or visit a website like wordcentral.com/buzzword/buzzword.php.
4. Read books for pleasure.
5. Use textbook glossaries to look up unfamiliar words.
6. Listen for new words during class discussions and dinner conversations.

continued

ATTRIBUTES

(noun): characteristics or features



When your youngster makes this word poster, she might list *creative* among her best attributes.

First, she should write a dozen or more words that describe her (*funny, upbeat, musical*). Then, she can look up each word in a thesaurus for a synonym that she likes better. She could

replace *funny* with *humorous* and *upbeat* with *optimistic*.
 Tip: If there are no synonyms, or if she prefers her original choice, she may keep the word she started with.

Next, your child should write her name in big fancy letters in the center of a sheet of paper or poster board and fill the space around it with the words from her list. Encourage her to decorate each word, too. For example, she could draw musical notes around *melodious*. Let your youngster hang the completed poster on her bedroom door to introduce exactly who she is!

HORSEFEATHERS

(noun): nonsense words

Is that a real definition, or is it *horsefeathers*? Players must get each other to believe fake definitions to win this game.

Have your youngster list 20 vocabulary words from his science or social studies book. To play, he selects a word and writes two definitions for it—one that's real and one that he made



up. Remind him to make his false definition as realistic as possible! For instance, his definitions for *velocity* might be “how fast something travels” (the real definition) and “extreme speed” (the false one). It's your job to figure out which is the actual definition. If you do, you score a point. If not, your child calls, “Horsefeathers!” and he scores a point.

Then, it's your turn to pick a word and give definitions. High score wins.

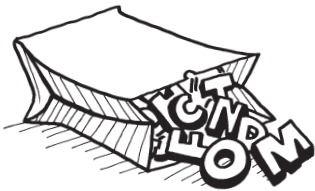
SCRUTINIZE

(verb): to look over carefully

You and your child will have to *scrutinize* letters to make words in this activity.

Have your youngster divide a set of magnetic letters into two bags, vowels in one bag and consonants in another. Then, each of you draws 1 vowel and 4 consonants so that you have 10 letters total to work with. Place all 10 letters on the table between you.

Ask your child to think of a word she can make using the letters and to give you a clue. She might say, “I see a six-letter word that means *graceful* and starts with N.” You have one minute to find her word: “Is it *nimble*?” If you do, you score a point. If not, she tells you the word and gets the point. Next, you find a word and give her a clue. Take turns until no more words can be found.

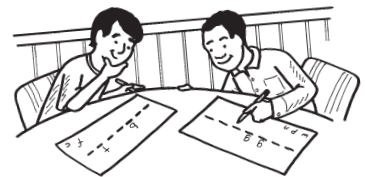


Return the letters to the bag, mix them up, and draw again. Play three rounds, and see who can score the most points.

DEDUCE

(verb): to reach an answer using evidence

The object of this two-player game is to *deduce* your opponent's mystery word—before he discovers yours!



To start, have your youngster pick a number between 4 and 10. Each person should secretly think of a word with that number of letters (say, 8) and draw a blank line for each letter on his paper. Then, take turns guessing a letter that you think might be in the other player's word. If you're correct, he writes the letter where it goes. If not, he writes it on the side (to keep track of letters that have been guessed). For example, if your word is *diameter* and he guesses *e*, fill in the blanks like this: e .

The first one to figure out the other person's word wins. Write new words, and play again.