

Every Child a Talker

Every Adult Involved

‘Find the Penguin’: a game to encourage vocabulary development

Children can learn new words quickly, if they are introduced in a fun way and in the right context. The more they say new words, the quicker they will use them in everyday language.

We often ask children to name objects, as a way of checking what they know, as well as teaching them new words. This can be fun, but can also be incredibly boring (for everyone involved!!)

‘Find the Penguin’ is a fun way of encouraging children to name objects and pictures, without saying, “What’s that?”

You will need:

- An animal picture book with a picture/photo of a penguin in it. (Ladybird ‘First word’ books are good, or a picture book with a picture and word on each page).
- A bag of small cuddly toys, including a toy penguin (Beanie Babies are ideal. I get mine from charity shops). Each toy should match an animal from the book. Got no Beanie Babies? Use plastic animals. (Beanie Babies are more appealing for younger children, plastic animals may be better for older ones.)
- A large cloth.

What to do:

- Sit in a circle. Share the book with the children, asking, “Is that a penguin?”, as you turn each page. They will spontaneously tell you what you are pointing at. Ask one child to be in charge of the book, open at the page with the penguin on.
- Put the cloth in the middle of the circle. Ask the children to shut their eyes and put all the toys under the cloth.
- Take turns to take out a toy from under the cloth. Ask each child, “Is that a penguin?”

You will find that they will enjoy saying, “No!!” and telling you what the object is. If they don’t know, then you can tell them! Give a big cheer when someone pulls out the penguin. Then start again, looking for the penguin, or choosing another animal to look for.

Of course you don’t have to use penguins: it could be any animal, or object. I just chose penguins because I have one in my bag and a book of animals with a penguin in it!

