

## Concepts

Linguistic concepts include describing words (such as colour, size and shape), position words (e.g. *under*, *top*, *middle*) and words relating to time and sequence (e.g. *yesterday*, *first*, *after*). Some children find these words more difficult to learn. They can be more abstract and their meaning can change depending on the context. For example, a dog could be described as 'big' when compared to a spider, but not when next to an elephant!

Some common concepts young children typically develop include:

- in/out, on/under, up/down
- big/little, hot/cold, wet/dry, slow/fast, empty/full, same/different
- before/after, first/last



Strategies for developing concepts:

- **Model language.** Children learn concepts by hearing words used in context. They will need to hear words used many times.
- **Repeat** to reinforce concepts in different situations. Children may not automatically transfer their learning so it is important to keep targeting words in different ways. For example, you may talk about it being 'cold' outside, 'cold' water in the water tray, 'cold' ice cream at dinnertime, etc.
- **Use everyday situations.** Highlight words in familiar routines and everyday activities to reinforce learning. For example, when washing hands, you might talk about water being 'hot' or 'cold', or hands being 'wet' or 'dry'; when getting dressed, clothes will come 'on' or 'off', and socks and shoes will be the 'same' or 'different'.
- Use **multi-sensory learning** with real objects and hands-on experiences. Concepts are often abstract so learning words in a meaningful, tangible way is really important.
- **Use your child's interests.** For example, if targeting 'big' and your child likes to play outdoors, try blowing big bubbles, doing big jumps, etc. If your child likes playing in the sand, make sure there are different sized objects and containers (e.g. big and little funnels and spades), try making a big sandcastle, digging a big hole, etc.
- **Offer choices.** Once familiar with the concept, try offering a choice (e.g. 'Is the car *on* the table or *under* the table?'). This provides a model to copy, rather than simply testing your child. Over time, they may be able to fill in a gap (e.g. 'This car is on the table, this car is...' – under the table).



See [Speech and Language UK](https://www.speechandlanguageuk.com) for more information and tips for supporting your child to learn new words.

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