



Practical strategies to help children understand describing words

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Understanding describing words

. Some children find describing words difficult to understand. This is because these words are more abstract than the words a child has learnt so far.



dog



Big dog



Little dog

To make things harder, describing words often change.



dog

A dog can be 'big' when compared with a mouse.

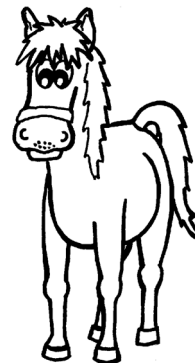


mouse

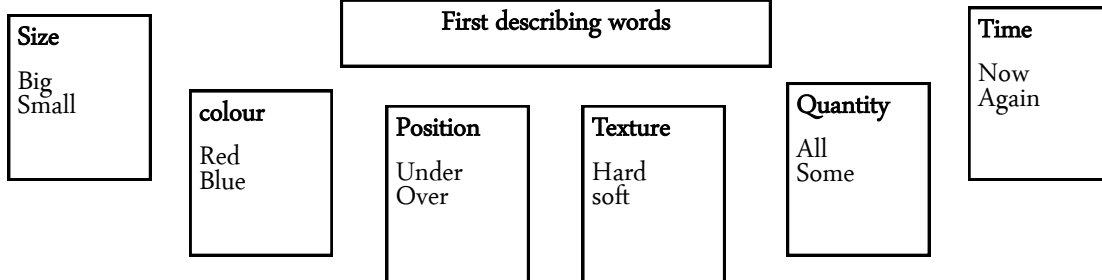


dog

A dog is 'small' when compared with a horse!



horse



Describing words are really important. They are used a lot in school to describe objects and events. They are used in instructions. They are important in subjects like maths, history and science. Children use them to make their explanations more interesting and to write stories.

Children need to understand describing words before they start to say them

Helpful hints for describing words

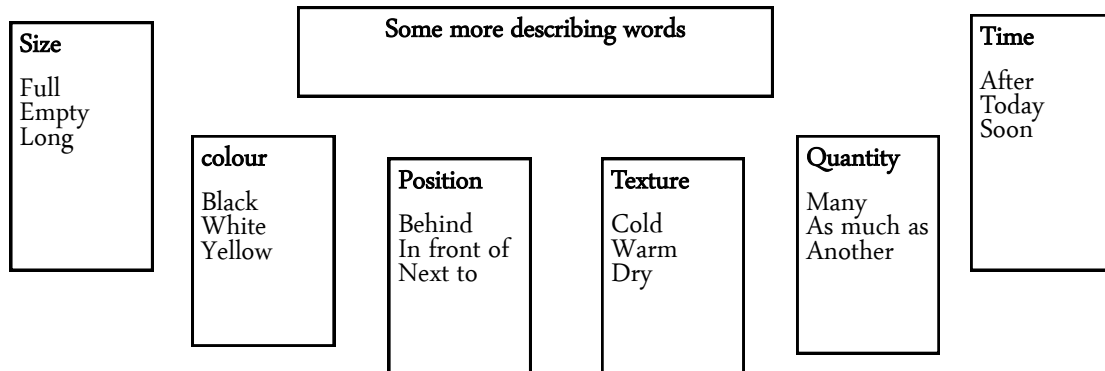
- Children usually start to learn about describing words when they are 2½ - 3 years old
- Or when they are talking in short sentences and can understand short sentences and directions
- At school, children need to be able to understand and use lots of describing words
- Describing words are needed in Maths too.

2 6 10

- Which is the biggest number?
- Which number comes between 2 and 10?
- Which number is before 6?

To Learn new describing words

- Look at the lists of 'describing words' listed on page 57. Start at the point where your child already knows some of them.
- Talk about one or two new describing words at a time.
- Focus on these two words for a week.
- Use these words in everyday situations and play games like those on page 58.
- Find the describing words in pictures and books.
- Use the describing words in as many different situations as you can.
- The following week choose another two words. This helps to make it interesting.



Children need to understand describing words before they can say them

More describing words

Some simple concepts are listed on page 53, here are some more:

Size & Shape	colour	Position	Texture	Quantity	Personal Qualities
Big Small Heavy Little Empty Fat Full Long Round Circle Square	Red Blue Green Black White Yellow	Inside Out Behind In front Next to Around Through Bottom Top Away Straight	Hard Soft Cold Dry	A lot Another Any Many No More As much as	Good Happy Naughty Sad Hungry Nice Pretty Silly

Some more difficult concepts are listed on page 54, here are some more:

Size & Shape	colour	Position	Texture	Quantity	Personal Qualities
Large Light Short Tall Thin Heaviest Longest Smallest Triangle Cross	Colour Orange Pink Purple	Backwards Beside Between Far High Low Middle Side Together Towards	Furry Rough Smooth Warm	About Both Every Few Half Most Nearly Only	Cross Frightened Kind Thirsty

These concepts are even more difficult:

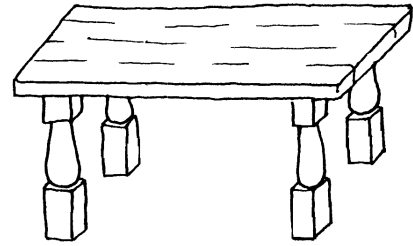
Size & Shape	colour	Position	Instructions	Quantity	Personal Qualities
Deep Narrow Shallow Wide Corner Hollow Solid Oval Rectangle Pattern	Dark Darker Light Lighter	Above Across Against Apart Below Facing Row Sideways	Tell me Describe Talk about Explain Imagine Choose Collect Repeat Arrange	Each Enough Equal Fewest Less Part Several Unequal Whole	Clever Excited Pleased Unkind

Lists are based on Living Language by Anne Lock, 1985 and the National Numeracy Strategy

Games to encourage the use of describing words

I spy

- Play 'I spy' but take turns to describe the object. For example, 'I can see something that is hard and flat, it's made of wood and it has four legs.'

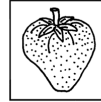
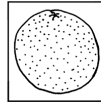


Feely bag

- Collect some objects and use a bag or a pillow case.
- Talk about the objects and describe them.
- Take turns to put one in the bag and describe it. The other person has to guess what it is.

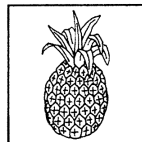
Give me six

- Collect six interesting objects or pictures and find a dice.
- Place the objects in a row.
- Take turns to throw the dice once and count from left to right to find the object you are going to use.
- Throw the dice again. This indicates how many describing words have to be used to talk about the object.



Colourful Shop

- Draw 6 simple outlines of one object e.g. jumper, hat, bag, cushion, ball, football kit, cat, rabbit, dog.
- You need 2 sheets of these blank pictures. You will have a total of 12 pictures.
- Make 2 identical sets of bright, colourful objects e.g. jumpers.
- Place one set face up in the 'shop' and the other set face down in a pile.
- Take turns to be the 'customer' and pick up a picture and describe it.
- The other person is the 'shop keeper' and has to find the matching item.



It's yellow, heavy and prickley.

Colourful Pairs

- Use the cards to play 'pairs' but describe each picture as you pick it up.