Closing the word gap: activities for the classroom

Key stage 2

oxford.ly/wordgap
Key stage 2

Jo Holmes has been teaching in Birmingham primary schools for almost 20 years. She specialises in English and has taught across the key stages, from EYFS through to KS3. Jo is passionate about encouraging children to read for pleasure. Here she shares practical ideas for developing children's vocabulary and closing the word gap.

Introduction

Experience has shown KS2 teachers that the SATs which children sit at the end of their primary education may prove particularly challenging for those with a more limited vocabulary. The games and activities included in this pack are designed to address and to begin to close that word gap, but, as it would be impossible to explicitly teach each word that children might encounter, these activities aim to also demonstrate that playing with language is fun. When children are excited by learning new words, they will be more receptive to ‘collecting’ vocabulary when encountered in daily life, as well as feeling more confident when tackling the unknown words, phrases, and idioms they may meet in different contexts.

Modelling this process to children is crucial, and using and celebrating high-quality language through every interaction with children is very effective – it is important to bear in mind that vocabulary is ‘caught’ as well as ‘taught’. This is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may suffer from a paucity of language which places them in a less advantageous position than their peers. The importance of providing a language-rich environment for these children cannot be overestimated. The balancing act required to teach new vocabulary while checking understanding in different contexts, consolidating previously taught words and phrases, and modelling grammatically correct English can be a delicate one, but it is incredibly worthwhile.

High-quality texts are another powerful resource for vocabulary development, as ‘book language’ is often more erudite than daily talk. A school which promotes and fosters a culture of reading for pleasure will be giving children an enormous advantage in this area. Research has shown that reading for pleasure has more impact on educational attainment than any socio-economic factors. However, it is precisely those disadvantaged children most in need that are less likely to read often, to see themselves positively as readers, and to have access to a broad range of different reading materials. It is therefore incumbent on us in school to provide children with an environment that fosters a love of reading, offering every child the benefits associated with becoming a lifelong lover of books.

Strategies to promote an ethos of reading for pleasure may include:

- Providing a well-stocked class and school library, allowing children access to a wide range of reading materials, such as picture books, poetry books, newspapers and magazines for children, information books, and ‘classic’ texts, both modern and traditional.

- Ensuring there is time, every day, for children to be read to. This allows children to access books – and language – beyond their reading ability and to begin to internalise the music of language, as well as enjoying the sheer pleasure of being immersed in a great story. Building in time to talk about the stories being read will also help to build a community of readers.
Developing teachers’ subject knowledge regarding high-quality children’s literature, including newly published works and keeping up to date with the reading choices of their children. This is particularly important when assessing children against the national curriculum expectations in reading, which require teachers to assess children’s attitude to reading and their thoughts and opinions on a wide range of texts.

Celebrating reading through whole-school events, such as World Book Day assemblies, author visits, and competitions.

Modelling a love of reading and valuing different ‘forms’ of reading – class reading displays could incorporate images of adults and children reading different types of text in different locations.

Providing cosy and comfortable spaces for reading, which include peer recommendations for ‘your next favourite book’.

Responding to books in different ways, including those which incorporate drama and role-play, or visual art.

Building reading relationships via paired reading across year groups, inviting parents and friends into school for regular ‘reading for pleasure’ sessions, or building a relationship with a published author who acts as a ‘Patron of Reading’.

As with KS1, it is important that children have some way of recording all the new vocabulary they learn for future reference. Working walls, word books, or vocabulary bookmarks can all be used to good effect, allowing children to collect and revisit words that they have learned before confidently using them themselves.

The activities in this section fall into two categories: quick activity ideas – ideal for registration, lining up, or for when you have a few minutes before lunch or at the end of the day – and session ideas – activities which require more time and a little more preparation. There is also a section at the end which you may wish to hand out to parents. This section comprises ideas for games and conversations at home, and useful links.

Please note that you will need to join www.oxfordowl.co.uk for free to access some of the featured resources.
Quick activity ideas

**Activity 1: Find and replace**
Display a short text extract, such as that in resource 1. Ask children to find and replace all the verbs/adjectives/adverbs – depending on the current teaching focus – while keeping the meaning as close to the original text as possible. Alternatively, ask them to replace all the verbs/adjectives/adverbs with ones which will change the meaning to make it the complete opposite!

**Activity 2: Challenge cards**
Cut out and laminate the challenge cards from resource 2. Encourage children to access and complete them independently, whenever time allows. Invite children to write their own challenge cards and add them to the set for others to complete.

**Activity 3: Find a link**
Give children a pair of words, and ask them to create a link between them. There does not have to be an obvious link and neither does there have to be a correct answer, as long as children can explain their thinking.

‘Can you create a link between stormy and placid?’

‘The lake was placid in the summer, but in the winter it was stormy.’

When children are familiar and confident with this game, they can be challenged to offer a pair of words which are not related, while their friends try to find a link between them.

‘Can you create a link between placid and intrigued?’

‘I was intrigued by what lay beneath the surface of the placid waters.’

**Activity 4: Fortunately/unfortunately**
Some children may be familiar with this traditional word game, which can be played in pairs or as a whole class. Offer a starter sentence which begins with Fortunately, … The next person has to continue with a sentence beginning with Unfortunately, … and so on.

‘Fortunately, I remembered to take my purse to the shops.’

‘Unfortunately, it was empty.’

‘Fortunately, I found £5 on the ground.’

‘Unfortunately, I dropped it.’
Activity 5: Make a sentence
Ask one child to offer a noun, another an adjective, a third a verb, and a fourth an adverb. Challenge the rest of the class to create a sentence using the given words. Children will enjoy coming up with unusual vocabulary to challenge their classmates!

Activity 6: Make a pair
Display a group of words, such as those from resource 3. Invite children to find pairs of words that are most similar in meaning (synonyms) and then pairs of words that are opposite in meaning (antonyms). How quickly can they match them up? Challenge children to create their own sets of word pairs to be presented to a partner to match.

Activity 7: Idioms
Start a collection of idioms on your working wall. Encourage children to add an idiom to the wall when they encounter one, and take time to discuss these and what they might mean. It's raining cats and dogs, The elephant in the room, I've got cold feet, It cost an arm and a leg are all good ones to start with. Once they know the real meaning, children could create pictures for display, with the meanings underneath.

Activity 8: Charades
This is a quick game to consolidate vocabulary encountered throughout the day. Select a child to choose a word or phrase which has been recently added to the working wall. They mime it or act it out, and their classmates guess which word has been chosen. The child who guesses correctly gets to choose a new word or phrase. This works really well with idioms!
It was a beautiful day, and the sun was shining gloriously. I chose to go for a long walk. Eagerly, I set off and walked all the way to the park. However, the sky grew darker and darker, and eventually it began to rain. It was torrential! I was drenched and stomped home grumpily.
### Resource 2: Challenge cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write an A–Z of adjectives.</th>
<th>Write an A–Z of adverbs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write an A–Z of verbs.</td>
<td>Write down as many synonyms for <em>said</em> as you can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the happiest day of your life. How did you feel?</td>
<td>Describe the most frightening thing that’s ever happened to you. How did you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the worst villain you can imagine.</td>
<td>Describe your dream bedroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe your dream holiday.</td>
<td>Describe the plot of your favourite book or film.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Match the synonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scarlet</th>
<th>replicate</th>
<th>roam</th>
<th>stomp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>march</td>
<td>nervous</td>
<td>inspect</td>
<td>placid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wander</td>
<td>succeed</td>
<td>mutter</td>
<td>excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apprehensive</td>
<td>commence</td>
<td>crimson</td>
<td>calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mumble</td>
<td>copy</td>
<td>examine</td>
<td>begin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Match the antonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sharp</th>
<th>orderly</th>
<th>inferior</th>
<th>truthful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>moving</td>
<td>enlarge</td>
<td>descent</td>
<td>stationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blunt</td>
<td>deceitful</td>
<td>hinder</td>
<td>graceless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>superior</td>
<td>elegant</td>
<td>enemy</td>
<td>reduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ascent</td>
<td>help</td>
<td>chaotic</td>
<td>ally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session ideas

Session 1: ‘Magpie-ing’ new words and phrases

You will need: class texts, e-book or individual reading books; resource 4.

Teach
Reading high-quality texts, which introduce children to new words and phrases and enable them to encounter them in meaningful contexts, remains one of the best ways to develop children’s vocabulary. As such, ‘modelled reading’ is a powerful tool and can demonstrate to children what to do when a new, unfamiliar, or unexpected word or phrase is encountered while reading.

Choose an extract from a class text, or an e-book such as The Secret Garden, available from www.oxfordowl.co.uk. Read the text aloud until the new word or phrase is encountered.

‘Confine? That’s a new word for me, and I’m not sure what it means. Let’s see if I can work it out.’

Model how to read on for context, how to substitute known words, and how to look for etymological clues, such as prefixes, suffixes, or words within words. Involve children in working out a meaning and developing a definition. Check the definition in a dictionary, and record the new vocabulary and its meaning on the working wall.

Practise and apply
Provide children with their own text extracts, chosen for their vocabulary-mining potential, or invite them to use their own reading books. Ask them to identify new words and phrases as they read and to complete resource 4.

Review
Collect children’s vocabulary choices, and record them on the working wall. Ask a child to choose a new word or phrase and mime it / act it out for the rest of the class to guess.

Ensure resource 4 is available for children to access independently during guided reading or free-reading time, and reward children who use it to help to build their own vocabulary.
### Write the word:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define it:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give two synonyms:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use it in a sentence:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<th>Give two synonyms:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use it in a sentence:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Resource 4: Magpie-ing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write the phrase:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define it:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use it in a sentence:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use it in a different sentence:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write the phrase:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define it:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use it in a sentence:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use it in a different sentence:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 2: The language of Shakespeare

You will need: enlarged versions of resources 5a and 5b, a copy of resource 5c per child.

Teach

Explain to children that the most famous writer of all time, William Shakespeare, had a great love of language. He was a shameless ‘magpie’ but also wasn't afraid to invent new words and phrases.

Display an enlarged copy of resource 5a, and ask children which of these famous phrases they think were invented by Shakespeare. (The answer is all of them!) Pick some out – or assign a few each to pairs of children – and invite children to consider their meanings. Share ideas, and clarify where necessary.

Children might like to find more words or phrases for which we can thank Shakespeare. You could set this as a home learning activity.

Explain that, although Shakespeare is famous for his love sonnets, he is also known for his insults. Display an enlarged copy of resource 5b, and invite children to consider the meanings and then to stand and insult the rest of their class – or their teacher!

Practise and apply

Identify the word class pattern of the final insult (adjective, adjective, noun), and explain to children that they are to use this pattern, and the template in resource 5c, to create their own insults.

Review

Invite children to share their insults. Award points for the most creative and the most insulting!
Resource 5a: The language of Shakespeare

A sorry sight …
All of a sudden …
All that glitters is not gold …
All’s well that ends well …
As dead as a doornail …
As pure as the driven snow …
Eaten out of house and home …
Fair play …
Foul play …
Forever and a day …
Green-eyed monster …
Heart’s content …
I did not sleep a wink …
In a pickle …
In the twinkling of an eye …
It’s all Greek to me …
Keep your distance …
Love is blind …
Make your hair stand on end …
Night owl …
Off with his head …
The be all and end all …
The game is up …
The Queen’s English …
There’s method in my madness …
Too much of a good thing …
Truth will out …
Vanish into thin air …
Wear your heart on your sleeve …
Wild goose chase …
Woe is me …
Good riddance …
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Act and Scene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Away, you three-inch fool!’</td>
<td>The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>Act 4, Scene 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I am sick when I do look on thee.’</td>
<td>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</td>
<td>Act 2, Scene 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I’ll beat thee, but I should infect my hands.’</td>
<td>Timon of Athens</td>
<td>Act 4, Scene 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I scorn you, scurvy companion.’</td>
<td>Henry IV, Part 2</td>
<td>Act 2, Scene 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘more of your conversation would infect my brain’</td>
<td>The Comedy of Errors</td>
<td>Act 2, Scene 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘the rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril.’</td>
<td>The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>Act 3, Scene 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes.’</td>
<td>Coriolanus</td>
<td>Act 5, Scene 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Thou art a boil / A plague sore.’</td>
<td>King Lear</td>
<td>Act 2, Scene 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘thou lump of foul deformity’</td>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Act 1, Scene 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘this poisonous bunch-back’d toad’</td>
<td>Richard III</td>
<td>Act 1, Scene 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘thou sodden-witted lord! Thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows’</td>
<td>Troilus and Cressida</td>
<td>Act 2, Scene 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name: ________________________________

Start with ‘Thou …’, add two adjectives, and complete your insult with a noun. Choose from the word banks or be like Shakespeare and make up your own!

**Adjectives:**
artless, bawdy, churlish, craven, dankish, droning, errant, fawning, fobbing, frothy, goatish, gorbellied, impertinent, infectious, jarring, loggerheaded, lumpish, mangled, mewling, paunchy, puking, puny, quailing, rank, reeky, roguish, spleeny, spongy, surly, tottering, unmuzzled, vain, venomed, villainous, warped, wayward, weedy, yeasty

**Nouns:**
barnacle, beast, bladder, boar, canker, dragon, foot-licker, haggard, harpy, lout, maggot, minnow, miscreant, villain, worm

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________

Thou __________________________________________
Session 3: Say what you see

You will need: images of well-known paintings (see below), small magnifying glasses.

Teach

This activity is most successful when working in small groups, ideally with magnifying glasses, allowing and encouraging children to look closely at the images.

Ask children to look closely at a picture that you have chosen for its ambiguity or potential for different interpretations. Examples might include *The Yawning Apprentice* by Munkácsy, *Living Still Life* by Dalí, or *Majas on a Balcony* by Goya.

Use a combination of questions and prompts to encourage children to talk about what they can see, with the aim of developing their visual literacy, critical thinking, and language development.

‘Tell me what you can see in this image.’

‘What one word would you use to describe the feel of this painting?’

‘How did the artist intend this image to be used?’

‘Would you change this image? How? Why?’

Practise and apply

Ask children to close their eyes and imagine they have entered the painting. What can they see? What can they hear? What can they smell? How do they feel?

Encourage them to work in groups, coming up with language to describe the painting and the feelings it evokes, and recording the most evocative words on sticky notes to display with their chosen image.

Review

Share children’s responses to the painting. Are there notable differences in their responses? Is there any common vocabulary? Where children have come up with words or phrases that are new to others, can they explain their meanings? Where else might these words be useful?
Session 4: Dictionary challenge

You will need: Oxford Primary dictionaries, worksheets of your choice from www.oxfordowl.co.uk, the word list from resource 6.

Teach
Dictionaries are an invaluable tool for teaching higher-order vocabulary. Introduce children to the dictionary and, depending on their familiarity with and confidence in using dictionaries, allow children time to investigate and explore their structure and function.

Discuss why and how we use dictionaries, eliciting that they are organised alphabetically and that they give us information regarding word class and origin, as well as definitions.

Give each child a word to find from the list on resource 6. Ask children to write the correct definition for their word, along with one or two made-up definitions. Children take it in turns to listen to and try to guess the correct definition for their friend’s word.

Practise and apply
Provide children with differentiated worksheets (according to the dictionaries you have and the levels of attainment within your class) to develop dictionary and language skills, available from www.oxfordowl.co.uk.

Review
Give children timed challenges to build their proficiency in dictionary usage.

‘What is the third word on page 34?’
‘Which word comes immediately before calm?’
‘What is the last word in the dictionary?’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource 6: Dictionary challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>squander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 5: Thesaurus challenge

You will need: Oxford Primary thesauruses, an enlarged version of resource 7, worksheets of your choice from www.oxfordowl.co.uk.

Teach
Like dictionaries, thesauruses are invaluable tools for teaching higher-order vocabulary, enabling children to understand and explore synonyms. Introduce children to the thesauruses and, depending on their familiarity with and confidence in using thesauruses, allow children time to investigate and explore them.

Discuss why and how we use thesauruses, eliciting that they are organised alphabetically and that they give us information regarding synonyms and antonyms.

Give each child a word to find, such as the list included in resource 7. Ask children to find two synonyms, the first being the one they feel is most appropriate, followed by a second choice. There does not have to be a ‘correct’ answer, but it is important for children to understand that there are shades of meaning, even with related synonyms.

Practise and apply
Provide children with differentiated worksheets (according to the thesauruses you have and the levels of attainment within your class) to develop thesaurus and language skills, available from www.oxfordowl.co.uk.

Review
Give children timed challenges to build their proficiency in thesaurus usage.

‘What is the first synonym for bad?’

‘Find an antonym for deafening.’

‘How many synonyms are there for big?’
## Resource 7: Thesaurus challenge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find the word</th>
<th>Find three synonyms</th>
<th>Rank them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sad</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nice</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session 6: Subordinating language

You will need: an enlarged version of the first sheet of resource 8, enough copies of the second sheet to allow one for each child.

Teach
Understanding the role and use of subordinating conjunctions enables children to develop their language and thinking skills. Recap previous learning on conjunctions, and elicit that they can be used to join two main clauses to create a longer sentence, but they can also be used to join a main clause and a subordinate clause. Display the following sentence:

*Please don't open your book until you have been told to do so.*

Ask children to identify the main clause in this sentence. Which is the subordinate clause? What conjunction joins them?

Understanding subordinating conjunctions can be crucial when unpicking mathematical problems. Try identifying the subordinating conjunction in this word problem for year 3 or 4:

*A skateboard costs £14, so how much will four skateboards cost?*

or in this one for year 5 or 6:

*Priya sees the same jumper in two different shops. In the first shop, the price of the jumper is £40, but in the second shop it has 30% off, although it was originally £48. Where should Priya buy her jumper and why?*

Try swapping in a different subordinating conjunction to establish that conjunctions cannot be used interchangeably and that different conjunctions are appropriate in different sentences.

Display an enlarged version of the first page of resource 8, and work together to match main and subordinate clauses with the appropriate conjunction.

Practise and apply
Children work independently to complete resource 8, identifying subordinating conjunctions and using them to write their own sentences. Children with additional needs may need to work with an adult.

Review
Ensure that a list of subordinating conjunctions is available on the working wall. In maths lessons, highlight the use of subordinating conjunctions, and remind children of their function.
### Resource 8: Subordinating conjunctions

Match the main clause, the subordinate clause, and the appropriate conjunction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main clause</th>
<th>Subordinating conjunction</th>
<th>Subordinate clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He pushed to the front of the queue</td>
<td>although</td>
<td>watching kittens on YouTube.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She had to practise the piano</td>
<td>because</td>
<td>I really prefer pears.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was worried</td>
<td>so</td>
<td>she could watch television.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose an apple to be polite</td>
<td>if</td>
<td>he could get his lunch first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She laughed out loud</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>I save enough birthday money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m going to buy some new trainers</td>
<td>when</td>
<td>he was late again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Circle the subordinating conjunction in each sentence below.

1. I took my umbrella because rain was forecast.
2. She read six pages of her book while waiting for the dentist.
3. Although I can see both sides, I agree with Jake.
4. We went to the cinema after we went out for lunch.
5. Once they had lined up, the children had to wait for their teacher.
6. You must have been hungry before that snack.
7. I’m allowed to sleep over if I’ve done all my homework.
8. We must keep trying until the referee blows the whistle.
9. Since you asked so politely, I’ll agree.
10. It’s my turn to wash the dishes as it’s Sunday.

Now choose four conjunctions to write some sentences of your own.

1. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Teach

‘It costs £7.25 to jump at the trampoline park during the week. At the weekend the cost is increased by another £3.50. How much does it cost to jump on Saturday?’

Write this sentence on the board, and give children time to think about and ‘play’ with the problem. Emphasise that, when solving problems, it is important to give oneself time to test ideas, make mistakes, get stuck, take risks, and adjust thinking. (For more on this, see ‘Teaching for Mastery’ at www.oxfordowl.co.uk)

Encourage children to talk about how to solve the problem, praising those that focus on a method, rather than rushing to find a solution. Display these four calculations:

a) £7.25 – £3.50
b) £7.25 + £3.50
c) £7.25 x £3.50
d) £7.25 ÷ £3.50

‘Which of these calculations would we use to solve the problem?’

‘How do you know? Can you identify the vocabulary which indicates the operation needed?’

‘If we changed the wording to decreased by, which calculation would we use then?’

Practise and apply

Distribute a copy of resource 9a to each child, and ask them to cut it up to create four cards. On the back of each card, children should record key words and phrases which relate to the mathematical operation shown.

These could include:

- addition, add, all together, combined, increase by, more than, plus, sum, total
- subtraction, subtract, decrease by, difference, fewer than, less than, minus, remaining
- multiplication, double, multiplied by, per, product, times, triple, array
- division, divided, groups, half, how many each, out of, quarter, factor.

Once children have completed their vocabulary cards, encourage them to use them when completing resource 9b: matching problems to the calculations necessary to solve them.

Review

Recap the vocabulary used to understand and solve word problems, and record on the maths working wall. Encourage children to retain their vocabulary cards as a future resource when working on problem-solving.

Offer children a calculation, and ask them to use their cards and key words to write a problem which matches the calculation.
Resource 9a:
Problem-solving

+  
−  
×  
÷
Highlight the key words or phrases in each word problem, and then circle the correct calculation needed to solve it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Calculation 1</th>
<th>Calculation 2</th>
<th>Calculation 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jaspreet has £11.50 saved, but Zac has £5 less than him. How much money does Zac have?</strong></td>
<td>a) £11.50 − £5 = £6.50</td>
<td>b) £11.50 + £5 = £16.50</td>
<td>c) £11.50 ÷ £5 = £2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A teacher needs 3 coloured pencils per child in her class. There are 30 children in her class, but 2 are absent. How many pencils does she need in total?</strong></td>
<td>a) 3 + 30 + 2 = 35</td>
<td>b) 30 − 2 = 28</td>
<td>c) 3 × 30 = 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A school of 600 children is grouped into classes of 30. How many classes are there?</strong></td>
<td>a) 600 − 30 = 570</td>
<td>b) 600 ÷ 30 = 20</td>
<td>c) 600 × 30 = 18 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A pair of trainers costs £45, but there is a third off in the sale. How much are the trainers in the sale?</strong></td>
<td>a) 45 − 3 = 42</td>
<td>b) 45 ÷ 3 = 15</td>
<td>c) 45 ÷ 3 = 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shannon is allowed 60 minutes of video game time each week. On Monday she plays for 18 minutes and on Wednesday she plays for 15 minutes. What is the combined time she has spent so far this week? How much time does she have remaining?</strong></td>
<td>a) 60 ÷ 15 = 4</td>
<td>4 × 18 = 72</td>
<td>b) 60 + 18 + 15 = 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annie has scored 7 goals for her football team. Aleesha has scored triple that, plus 2 more. How many goals has Aleesha scored?</strong></td>
<td>a) 7 × 3 = 21</td>
<td>21 + 2 = 23</td>
<td>b) 7 + 2 + 3 = 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Can you write your own maths problem for a partner to solve? Don’t forget to include the correct and incorrect calculations!
Session 8: Poetry, please!

You will need: a copy of ‘Bush Fire’ by Jackie Kay, enough copies of resource 10 to provide one for each child.

Teach
Poetry is a very powerful tool in developing vocabulary and teaching children that playing with words is fun! Exploring the devices which poets use for effect enables children to understand and use these devices in their own writing. ‘Liar’ by Rachel Rooney is a wonderful poem to explore metaphor, ‘The Midnight Skaters’ by Roger McGough uses alliteration, personification, and word play and ‘Bush Fire’ by Jackie Kay is ideal for examining similes.

Display a copy of ‘Bush Fire’, and read aloud to the children, emphasising the repetition and rhythm of the language. Allow children some thinking time, and then encourage initial responses to the poem.

Introduce or recap the term simile, and explain that a simile compares a subject to something else, using as or like. Identify examples of similes in the first verse of the poem.

Practise and apply
Model to children how to complete resource 10, using synonyms and adjectives to enrich the simile.

Review
Share examples of children’s similes, celebrating examples of exciting vocabulary.
Name: __________________________________________

Can you complete the similes below? If you’re up for a challenge, use synonyms and add adjectives for interest. The first has been done this way for you.

1. Quick
   
   As swift as a sure-footed fox

2. Sad

3. Tired

4. Interested

5. Old

6. Clever

7. Slow

8. Mischievous
Although your child is older, shared reading remains extremely important for developing their vocabulary. Read with your child whenever you can, ask them to read to you, or take turns reading pages or chapters of a book. Public libraries are a fantastic resource for allowing children to borrow books for free.

Talking with and listening to your child teaches them the importance of spoken language and supports them in developing their vocabulary. When chatting with your child, try to avoid asking too many questions, but let them hear your own thoughts; children need to hear language in order to use it themselves. When you do ask your child a question, it is ideal to ask an ‘open’ question – one that cannot be answered with a single word. For example, ‘What was the best thing that happened today?’ rather than ‘How was school?’, to which the inevitable answer is ‘Fine’!

Here are some more suggestions:

- ‘If you had three wishes, what would they be?’
- ‘Is it better to be a child or an adult? Why?’
- ‘Should we treat animals as we treat humans?’
- ‘Is school uniform a good idea?’
- ‘Should children have unlimited screen time?’
- ‘Can one person change the world?’
- Give children three connected words, and ask them to name the connection and come up with a fourth, for example: bungalow, flat, maisonette …?
- Play Would you rather? For example, would you rather visit the Arctic or the jungle? Why?
- Play Who am I? by choosing a famous person whom children have to guess by asking questions which have only a yes/no answer.
- Riddles are good for developing critical thinking skills. There are plenty of examples online, for example: What can you catch but not throw? Answer: a cold.
- Puzzles such as word searches and crosswords are great for developing vocabulary and helping children to spot patterns within language.

For more ideas, see: https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/fun-ideas-learning-at-home/

For more information on why the word gap matters and how you can help your child to develop their vocabulary at home, see: https://blog.oxfordowl.co.uk/why-the-word-gap-matters-and-what-can-you-do-at-home-to-close-it/
For further information

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