

Ideas to Support Word Retrieval

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People with word retrieval difficulties often quickly use words, such as *thing*, *thingie*, *thing-a-ma-jig*, *doodad*, and *doo-hickey* to get out of a word block, or they may simply back down with *I don't know* or *I forget*. This can happen during relaxing or stressful times. As a listener, exercising patience and allowing quiet time for processing can help. After pausing, with gentle encouragement, offer suggestions. Sometimes as soon as a first sound is spoken for a suggested word, the challenged person retrieves their word. Perhaps the sound cue sparked their brain. At that moment, introducing some synonyms and making associations with a targeted word will boost their internal word bank. Think of it as a deposit into a savings account for future word use. Understand that anyone may experience word retrieval issues at some point. Kindness and understanding are key elements for success. Here are some ideas to consider for strengthening vocabulary output:

Vocabulary

- ❖ Describe objects hidden within box via feel, but not sight
- ❖ Play hide-and-seek games, describing placement of hidden targets
- ❖ Guide someone to what's missing in a picture by description

Functions

- ❖ Describe how a tool is used (E.g., Nail = Hammer, Screw = Screwdriver)
- ❖ Describe how body parts are used (E.g., Why do camels have humps?)
- ❖ Provide alternatives to a situation that may need a different approach. E.g., if you don't have a hammer, how else can you pound in a nail?

Associations

- ❖ Make associations for items (E.g., hammers are for pounding, saws are for cutting)
- ❖ Label and discuss people's jobs (E.g., what does a baker do?)
- ❖ Name parts to a whole (E.g., Parts of a pizza are)

Direction Following

- ❖ Present direction for art projects, E.g., origami
- ❖ Discuss steps to work through a schedule change
- ❖ Give directions to a new activity

Categorization

- ❖ List several members in a category or name the category for listed items
- ❖ Discuss how items in 2-3 different piles relate, then separate
- ❖ Determine a misfit item in a group and discuss reasoning

Similarities and Differences

- ❖ Explain similarities and differences between items
- ❖ For differing items, what might be remaining similarities between them?
- ❖ Name synonyms and antonyms for words

Prepositions

- ❖ Describe how to get through an obstacle course
- ❖ Describe location of a specific target in a room or picture for others to find
- ❖ Give directions to a location as though acting as a GPS

Sequencing or Retelling Stories

- ❖ Sequence a specific activity, such as making a bed
- ❖ Sequence activities during a day
- ❖ Retell simple stories emphasizing beginning, middle, end or first, next, last

Problem Solving

- ❖ Discuss cause and effect of choices
- ❖ Present a broken toy and discuss how to fix it
- ❖ Present a problem and brainstorm solutions together

Many commercial games can help with language development, including specifically vocabulary. Consider Pictionary, Scrabble, Scattegories, Memory, Twister, Guess Who, Clue, crossword puzzles, and scads of others.

*Establish one night a week as family fun night.
Likely everyone will benefit!*

