



Parent Information Sheet

Supporting Children With Word Finding Difficulties

Children with specific word-finding difficulties often understand a wide range of words, but they struggle to think of the word they want to say. These problems often arise from other difficulties such as poor phonological processing and /or inaccurate storage of a new word leading to the inability to retrieve it when it is required. Children with word-finding difficulties may become frustrated and lose motivation when trying to communicate as they are unable to convey the message they want to get across. Their difficulties can show up in several different ways:

- *slow recall of familiar vocabulary (long pauses of several seconds).*
- *the inaccurate naming of vocabulary; using a linked word e.g. 'horse' for 'donkey'.*
- *sound errors, unrelated to any additional speech difficulties, where part of the word is retrieved correctly e.g. 'kangoo' for 'kangaroo' or 'cove' for 'comb'.*
- *Overuse of fillers such as 'thingy' and 'stuff'.*
- *Circumlocution or 'talking 'around' the target word without actually then remembering it.*

There may not be one specific solution to helping a child who is stuck for a word - a variety of approaches may be useful and it is often a case of trial and error to see what works best for the individual child.

1. **Liaise** - Liaise with your child's Speech & Language Therapist & your child's Class Teacher / SENCO.
2. **Support** - Ask your child if they have forgotten the word and offer help by asking 'Are you stuck?' or 'Would you like some help with this word?'
3. **Reassure** - Reassure your child and boost his/her confidence by saying 'I know you know the word - you just can't remember it right now, can you?'
4. **Describe** – Ask your child to describe the thing they are thinking of. If appropriate, repeat their 'clues' back to them to help them build up a better picture in their mind of the item they are describing and naming.
5. **Ask Questions** - Ask your child if they know if it is a long word or a short word. Ask if they can think of the first sound / what it begins with. If you know the word they are trying to say, tell them the first sound.
6. **Time** - Give your child plenty of quiet time and space to think – it is often all your child needs to think of the word. Discourage other children and adults from 'helping' by giving the child the word unless this is a strategy that the child has said he finds helpful. Sometimes it can make children feel a failure

if they have not been given long enough to try and succeed so just stand back for a little while.

7. **Repeat** - Once your child has retrieved the word repeat it and ask them to say it again. This reinforces both the phonological the sound structure and word meaning.
8. **Honesty** - Older children could be encouraged to voice their difficulties, e.g. "I'm sorry, sometimes I can't think of words", rather than just struggle on at length.
9. **Praise** - Don't forget to praise your child for their efforts.