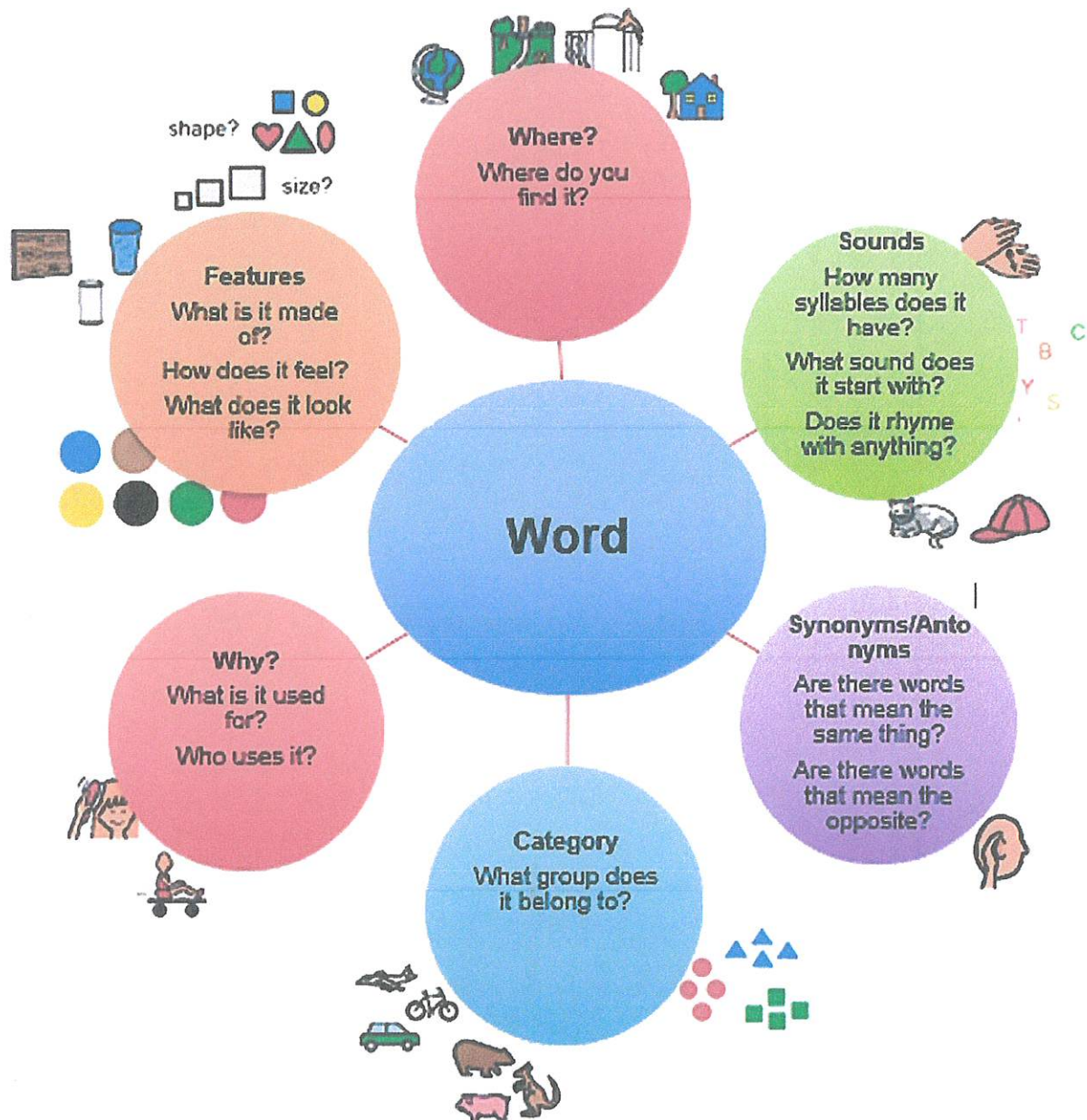




How Do We Learn Vocabulary?

We all learn words through hearing or reading them. The more we know about a word, the greater understanding we have of it, and so the more likely we are to use it in our talking. If we only hear a word once, we will not be as confident to use it in our talking (e.g. we are more likely to say the words 'rich' or 'grand' instead of the word 'opulent'). However, if we hear a word lots of times, in different environments and contexts, we will be more likely to use it (e.g. 'window').

Children who have language difficulties, will need to hear a word over and over again to recognise and remember it before they can use it. By giving children as much information about a word as we can when teaching it, we are increasing their chances of understanding and using the word.





Using a Word Map to Teach Vocabulary

Working through each circle on the word map (when learning new vocabulary) will give a child a deeper understanding of the word, and create links in their vocabulary store to help them remember the word and recall (find) it when they want to use it when talking or writing. Try using the word map first with a simple word that your child already knows, e.g. 'cat'. If they struggle to complete any of the circles with an adult helping, they may need more support with their understanding in these areas:

Where?

This is looking at the location that we would see the item / hear a word. To support a child's understanding of 'where', talk about 'where you are/have been that morning'. Play games such as 'hide & seek' or 'where do things belong?', talking about where the item is. Then talk with your child about items / words they have seen / heard before. Can your child remember where they first saw something e.g. 'sand' Can they think about where they would find the word e.g. 'butterfly' – 'garden / outside'

Sounds

The 'sounds' of a word include the following: rhyme, syllables (number of 'claps' in a word), and the first sound in the word. Rhyming games include 'eye spy...', matching words that rhyme, and making up a rhyme for a word. Note that not all words have another word that rhymes, so we can make up words, e.g. orange / splorange. To support syllable identification, clap out words with your child and count the number of syllables (claps). E.g. mi-cro-scope has 3 syllables. Give your child a picture and ask them how many syllables does this word have? To identify the first sound in a word, talk about it! Look at each other's mouths as you say the word if this helps. Note that here, sounds and letters are different, so writing the word won't always help, e.g. first sound in 'phobia' is 'f' not 'p'.

Synonyms / Antonyms

Synonyms are words that mean the same thing, e.g. finish / complete. Antonyms are words that mean the opposite of each other, e.g. finish / start. Choose a word, and talk with your child about the synonyms and antonyms, can they think of any by themselves? It is easier to discuss words which are not physical objects, such as adjectives & adverbs (describing words), emotions.

Category

This is asking your child to put their word into a 'group'. Play games which involve sorting pictures into categories (e.g. farm animals vs sea animals, liquids vs solids), naming categories (e.g. musical instruments) and giving 5 items within that category (e.g. trombone, flute, piano, trumpet, symbols). Ask your child to identify which item doesn't belong in that category, and why is it the odd one out? Talk about the similarities and differences between items.



Why?

Take an item in your house that your child will use a lot (e.g. cup) and talk about WHY we use it i.e. the function of it – ask what do we use it for? Then talk about words that your child does not come across as frequently, e.g. violin, spanner. For words that are not physical objects, discuss why we use these words, e.g. orbit 'we use the word *orbit* to describe how the Earth circles (orbits) the sun'. OR 'we use the word *however*, to link two contradictory statements'.

Features

Describe a word / item. Use your 5 main senses here as a guide: how does it feel, look, sound, smell, taste? If your word is a verb, talk about how you can describe the action, e.g. 'slowly' 'daily' 'cautiously'. You may not be able to fill this circle in for words that do not have a physical representation, e.g. shimmer.

- If you come across a word when reading a book together that your child doesn't have a good understanding of, complete a word map or discuss it. Drawing the word or item can really support a child's understanding, even for older children.
- If you are out and about and your child hears a new word, or says 'I don't know what that means', discuss the circles of the word map together.
- You can also put curriculum words into word maps that your child has learnt at school, e.g. Equation. **Why?** To describe a number sentence where both 2 sides are equal (=). **Where?** Maths. **Sounds?** First sound E, 3 syllables, rhymes with invasion. **Category:** maths words. Use completed word maps as revision tools and visual supports when doing homework.
- Revisiting new words more than once has a huge impact on a child's ability to remember and use a word when talking. Why not start a book where you can write new words along with completed circles from the word map. Another idea is to have 'fridge words'. This is where new words are written up on the fridge (somewhere used often in the house!) to act as a reminder for adults to ask the child about that word, e.g. 'how many syllables does habitat have?' 'what's that thing called that we use to cut vegetables with in the kitchen?'.