Fun With Language
Playing Word and Language Games

Playing games with words improves the children’s oral language and pre-reading skills and makes learning fun! Try these ideas with your children.

**Be a Word Actor**

**To Prepare:**
Write 10 or 20 action words, with corresponding pictures, on large index cards (such as pitch, catch, run). Place the cards in a box labeled Action Words.

**In Class:**
1. Have the children sit in a circle.
2. Invite one child at a time to be a word actor. Have the child draw a word from the box, keeping it hidden from the other children, and whisper it to you (this lets you help the child read the word). Then have the child act out the word while the other children watch and try to guess what the word is.
3. When the word has been guessed, the word actor points to the child who guessed correctly. You can give hints if the class is struggling.
4. Hold up the word card and have the class read it aloud together. Choose another word actor and repeat until all the children have had a turn or all words have been used.

**Extension:**
Make everyone a word actor during read alouds. When you come to an action word, have all of the children act it out.

**Silly Sentences**

**To Prepare**
Recite silly sentences using two or more words from the same family, such as “The pig danced a very fun jig” or “The pig went to the store and bought a black wig.”

**In Class**
In whole or small group, say the sentences aloud as the children listen for the word family words. Have the children repeat the words that are alike.

**Extension**
Referring to word family lists, help the children create their own sentences. Record these on chart paper. Have the children illustrate these sentences and post the drawings by the chart.

**Spell It Out**
Use the children’s growing knowledge of phonics to spell out the words they use to represent sounds, such as “beep” for the sound of a horn or “vroom” for a truck driving.

1. In whole or small group, have the children call out sound words.
2. Choose one and ask the children to help you spell the word. Have the children repeat the word, stretching it out and listening for sounds they know.
3. As the children suggest letters they hear in the sound, write these letters on the board. Support the children, if they get stuck, by repeating sounds or suggesting letters.
4. When the word is written, have everyone read it aloud and choose another word.

**Scavenger Hunt**

**To Prepare**
Choose a group of related words, such as members of a word family, kinds of trucks or names of different train cars. Write each word on a large index card. Include a helpful illustration. Hide these cards around the room.

**In Class**
As a center or small group activity, tell the children they are going on a scavenger hunt. Show them one of the cards. Tell them how many cards to find and give hints about where to look (i.e., cards will not be in the restroom, animal cage or in a closet or drawer).

When the children have found the cards, read all of the words aloud and have the children guess what topic the words describe.
To comprehend a story, the children need to understand the connection between what the text says and what the illustrations show. Doing picture walks and inviting the children to examine and discuss illustrations helps them understand this connection. There are also instructional strategies and activities you can do to build this comprehension skill.

**Matching Sentences to Illustrations**

**To Prepare**
Choose a book that your children know well. Make copies of several pictures from the book and paste them onto cards. On separate cards, write a sentence that directly describes each picture. These sentences can come directly from the book or they can be original. Put matching color dots on the back of the pictures and sentences so the children can self-check their work.

**In Class**
1. Show the children the pictures and ask them to describe what they see. Place the pictures in a pocket chart so the children can see them.
2. Read the sentences aloud one at a time, having the children say which picture the sentence describes. If the children aren’t sure, remind them to look at the picture and think about the words in the sentence.
3. When all of the sentences have been matched, review the pictures and sentences again. Model using the matching color dots to check your work.
4. When the children are comfortable, move this activity to small groups. Place the pictures and sentences on a table and have the children work together to match them. Be prepared to read the sentences to the children who need this support. Remind the children to use the dots to check their work.

**Writing Sentences for Illustrations**

This interactive writing activity will help the children learn to write sentences to describe their own drawings. The activity may be repeated numerous times with different pictures.

**To Prepare**
1. Choose a picture to write about. Make it large enough for all of the children to see. A picture of something they have been studying, such as cows, will work better than a picture with unknown elements. Put the picture at the top of a piece of chart paper.
2. Brainstorm a list of words that could be used to describe the picture. Write these words on paper and keep it with you during the activity.

**In Class**
1. Show the children the picture. Tell them you want everyone to help write a sentence about it. For example, you might use a picture of one of the children in the book What We Wear.
2. Have the children talk about what they see. Encourage them to think of exciting words they could use. Give examples from the list you brainstormed earlier. Make a list of the words the children suggest and post it next to the picture sheet.
3. Encourage the children to brainstorm creative phrases to describe the picture. Ask questions that will extend their thinking, such as “What do you think the child is thinking?” “Where do you think the child is going?” “Who else might the child be with?”
4. Record their phrases on chart paper.
5. After the children have brainstormed answers to these questions, tell the class that everyone is going to work together to make one great sentence.
6. Use the interactive writing process to create a sentence. For each part of the sentence, from deciding how to begin through deciding on the punctuation, have the children call out and discuss their suggestions. Encourage all suggestions but choose ones that make sense, describe the picture best and are fun. The final sentence might be something such as:

**Hint**
The children may need a lot of support from you at first. Most of the ideas may be yours when you first model this.

**Writing Sentences for the Children’s Own Work**

Working in small groups or one-on-one, repeat this process to help the children create fun sentences to describe their own drawings.
While judging whether two things are the same or are different seems like a simple skill to experienced learners, it is actually a high-order thinking task that requires using prior knowledge and active looking, listening and comprehension skills. Young children learn the concepts of same and different through explicit modeling, discussion and hands-on independent work.

### Introducing Same and Different

#### Similar Qualities

1. Choose two objects that are not identical but have similar qualities, such as a red crayon and a red marker.
2. Show them to the children, saying that these two objects are the same because they have something in common. Have the children discuss what they see and list everything that makes the two items the same (red, both are used for writing, both have a similar shape) on the left side of a T-chart.
3. Explain that the two objects are also different (one is wrapped in paper, one is plastic). Have the children discuss the differences and list these on the right side of the T-chart.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 with two other very similar objects, such as a red crayon and a blue crayon.
5. As children gain experience describing what they see, introduce comparing two objects that look very different from one another, such as a sandal and winter boot, or paper and a dry-erase board. Repeat steps 1-3. Be open to all of the children’s ideas. Young children often think of comparisons adults may not consider, such as announcing they hate both things, or both items are smaller than a dinosaur. Record any statement that is true.

6. In small groups, have the children do open-ended exploration of the classroom by searching for any two items that are the same or different. Have the children explain their choices and help them record their descriptions. Be ready to repeat steps 1-3 individually with any children who need more practice with the concept.

#### Similar Qualities

Gather two equal sets of the same objects, such as crayons, counters or blocks.

1. Have the children discuss what is the same about each set. Stress thinking about the quantity. Count each set out loud.
2. Repeat steps 1-2 with unequal sets. Count each set out loud.
3. Repeat steps 1-2 with the same quantity of different objects. Have the children discuss the similarities and differences, again stressing counting each set out loud.

### Small Group Activities

#### Ask a Friend

1. Group the children into pairs and have them sit facing their partner.
2. Ask the children to find one thing that is the same between them and their partners and one thing that is different. Encourage them to think about color and style of hair or clothes or, for those who are ready, what age they are, what month they were born or what street they live on.
3. Bring the pairs to the small group and ask, “What did you find that was the same as your partner? What was different?” Help each child record their answers on a T-chart. Form different pairs and repeat.

#### Phonological Awareness

##### Same Letter or Blend

1. Make cards with pictures of different objects beginning with letters the children are studying or already know. Write the name of each object on the card.
2. Have the children sort the cards by the first letter or blend. Talk with them about their work.
3. For the children who are ready, you may make cards featuring objects that start with a letter, such as “t,” which is also part of a blend, such as “tr-,” and ask them to sort the letters into one pile and the blends into another.

##### Same Sound

1. Make cards with pictures of different objects beginning with sounds the children are studying or already know. Write the name of each object on the card.
2. Have the children read each word aloud and sort the cards by the initial letter sound they hear.
3. For the children who are ready, include a few words that begin with different letters but have the same sound, such as “can” and “key,” or the same letter with different sounds, such as “cave” and “cereal.” Talk with the children about what they hear and see on these cards.
And After That
Sequencing Story Events

Understanding the sequence of events is vital to understanding a story. When the children practice naming and ordering a story’s main events using written and/or picture prompts, they learn about story structure, which will increase their comprehension.

Introducing Sequencing

When any new skill is taught, it is best to begin with content the children know. To introduce sequencing, begin by having the children practice with activities from your daily classroom schedule.

To Prepare

Write the first three activities from the daily schedule on sentence strips, such as story time, centers and small groups. Add pictures or icons that represent these activities on your schedule chart. Make three sets of these strips.

In Class

1. Bring your daily schedule chart to the whole group area. Read the chart aloud with the children, reviewing each item. Draw their attention to the activities for which you have created sentences.
2. Show the three sentence strips and read them aloud. Have the children echo read the sentences.
3. Have the children help you put the sentences in order by comparing them to the daily schedule chart. Use the words “first,” “second” and “third” to describe the sequence. Distribute the other sets and repeat, having the children holding the first activity bring their strips forward, then the second and third. Ask the children to describe their sentences in full sentences: “I have the ______ (first, second or third) activity.”
4. When the children are comfortable, have them work in small groups sequencing the sentences. The children can check their work with the schedule chart and/or with other groups.

Sequencing Using Picture Prompts

This activity can be done several times using different books. The children will benefit from many opportunities to practice this new skill. All sequencing activities can be used as center applications after the children have seen them modeled and used in small groups.

To Prepare

Choose a book you have read many times. Copy five illustrations that show main events in the story, such as the bears leaving home, the porridge, the beds and the Goldilocks running away from the Big Book The Three Bears, a big book included in this Blueprint Curriculum. Glue each one to a card with a word, phrase or sentence about the illustration written directly under the picture.

On the back of each card, write the number showing the order of the card in the sequence (i.e., 1 on the first event card, 2 on the second event card).

In Class

Show the children the cards and let them name the story. Invite them to recall aloud what happens in the story. Retell the story using the cards as a guideline.

Model putting the cards in sequential order, talking aloud about what you are doing. Show the children how to turn the cards over to check the numbers on the back. Use the vocabulary first, second, third, etc.

In small groups, have the children lay all of the cards out on a table or the floor. Ask the children to put the cards in sequential order. Have the book nearby for the children to check if they want. Remind them to check their work by looking at the number on the back of the cards.

Sequencing Using Written Prompts

A variation of this activity may be done numerous times with sentences from different books or lines from short poems or nursery rhymes.

To Prepare

Choose a book the children have heard many times. Choose five sentences from the book that describe main events. Write each sentence on a sentence strip. To each, add a small picture related to the sentence as a clue. Number the backs of the strips in order, as you did above.

In Class

1. Show the children the featured book and invite them to review what they remember about what happens in the story. Read the sentences aloud and use them as a guide to retell the story.
2. Model putting the sentences in sequential order as you did with the cards above.
3. In small groups, have the children review all of the sentences. Ask the children to put the cards in sequential order on a table or in a pocket chart. Have the book nearby for the children to check if they want.
4. Help the children check their work by comparing their sentences to what they remember about the story. Remind them to check their work by looking at the numbers on the backs.