

# Supporting Young English Learners with Word Play

Regional Educational Laboratories  
West, Northwest,  
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

Families and caregivers, you play an important role in your child's language learning. Children can learn new words every day by listening, speaking, writing, and drawing. The purpose of this activity is to help your child learn and practice a small set of new words over time, making them part of their vocabulary.

Keep in mind:

- You and your child can use your home language or English.
- Learning new words in your home language will also help your child with English.
- Enjoy this time with your child. Learning together is fun!

## Why teach words?

Talking, reading, and writing about new words every day helps children to build their vocabulary.

## Let's play with words!

Follow the steps below. See the back for additional language supports.

**Step 1: Choose a new word** to teach your child. It could be a word from a book, movie, website, or a conversation.

**Step 2: Provide a simple definition** of the new word. Example:  
*When something is really big, it is enormous.*



▶ **Step 3: Give an example** of the word in a sentence. Example: *A watermelon is enormous compared to a grape.*

**Step 4:** Ask your child to **use the word** in a sentence. Example: *Tell me about something you have seen in our neighborhood that is enormous.*



▶ **Step 5:** Have your child **write or draw** the new word. Put the new words and drawings on the refrigerator or on a wall, and use them often in conversation.

**Step 6:** Encourage your child to **practice the new word**. Example: *How many times can you say the new word in a sentence in one day? How many times do you see or hear the word?*

**Learning Goal:** Children will learn and practice new words

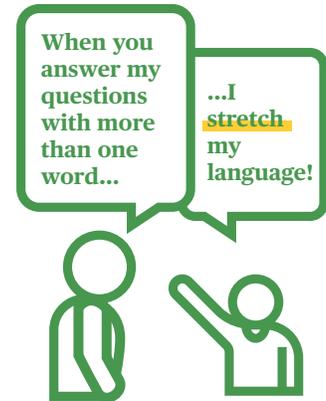
**Grades:** Kindergarten–3rd grade

**Materials:** Paper and crayons, pencils, or markers

## Additional Language Supports

Your child can build their vocabulary and stretch their language by playing with words. Consider using the questions and responses below to talk about the new word with your child.

Family and Caregiver Questions	Child Responses
What new word did you learn or hear today?	Today I learned the word ____.
What does ____ mean?	____ means ____.
What is the opposite of ____? Example: <i>What is the opposite of enormous?</i>	The opposite of ____ is ____. Example: <i>The opposite of <u>enormous</u> is <u>tiny</u>.</i>
What word means the same as ____? Example: <i>What word means the same as enormous?</i>	A word that means the same as ____ is ____. Example: <i>A word that means the same as <u>enormous</u> is <u>huge</u>.</i>



### Word Challenge:

Use a word map to provide a definition, show other words that mean the same (synonyms) and words that are opposites (antonyms), use the word in a sentence and draw a picture related to the word.

