

Word Wonders Activity 2: Community Helpers Take Action

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Use simple vocabulary to describe actions and movements (18 to 48 months)
- Recognize/understand simple language describing actions and movements (24 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will explore new words that describe the actions (verbs) community helpers perform. There are many opportunities in this unit for children to hear, use, practice, and act out new vocabulary, including action words. Some children may only listen and respond with gestures or actions. Others may approximate (or attempt) these new words. Others will be able to repeat portions or whole words as they hear them over and over as they play. Typically, children will first recognize or *understand* the meaning of a word, then they may say it occasionally, and finally they will *use* the word as part of their regular vocabulary in conversation. Repetition over time is key to learning new vocabulary.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *Fire Chief Fran* by Linda Ashman

For Activity 1 (Engage):

Handout 1: Community Helper Cards

Index cards

For the mail carrier station:

- 4 shoeboxes
- About 3-4 envelopes per child
- Variety of stamps, stamp pads, and stickers
- Markers or crayons
- 2-3 cloth bags (like reusable shopping bags)
- 5-6 empty shoe boxes

For the garbage collector station:

- 2 cardboard boxes, large enough to hold the plastic bottles and newspaper below
- Newspaper or scrap paper
- 5-10 clean, empty plastic drink bottles

For the doctor station:

- 3-4 boxes of Band-Aids (enough for your class to use with dolls/stuffed animals)
- 2 bags of cotton balls
- Small plastic bowls for cotton balls

2 children's tweezers (for picking up cotton balls)

Doctor's kit (more than one if possible)

3-4 dolls or stuffed animals

Optional: Small wastepaper basket for Band-Aid wrappers

For Activity 2 (Expand):

Handout 2: Action Words Game Template

1 Cube block (plastic or foam is best)

Scissors (teacher only)

Tape

One additional cube block and thin marker (teacher only, if doing the extension for older children)

Optional: Large foam dice (can take the place of the cube block above)

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- **For 18 to 30 month olds:** Print the mail carrier, garbage collector, and doctor from **Handout 1**. Cut out each and glue to index cards. Put them aside until needed.
- **For 30 to 48 month olds:** Print out two copies of all the community helper cards from **Handout 1**. Cut out each and glue to index cards. You will make two sets of cards. One set you will spread in front of the children. One set you should keep close by to play the game.
- **For both age ranges:** Create different activity stations to act out the community helper roles.
 - **For the mail carrier station,** take the tops off of the shoeboxes; these will be mailboxes. Place these boxes in a few locations around the room. On another table, create a place where children can stamp envelopes, cover with stickers and scribble on them. Place the cloth delivery bags on the table as well.
 - **For the garbage collector station,** in another area of the classroom, crumple up newspaper and spread it on the floor. Spread the plastic bottles on the floor. Tape a piece of newspaper to the front of one cardboard box and tape a plastic bottle to the front of the other. These will be visual cues to help children with sorting. Position the boxes some distance from the "garbage."
 - **For the doctor station,** at another table or floor area, place the Band-Aids (about 3-4 per child) and position the stuffed animals/dolls in a semicircle. If desired, pre-open the Band-Aids or let this be a fine motor challenge for children. Put the cotton balls in bowls with tweezers. Place the doctor's kits here with the accessories available. If using, place the wastepaper basket nearby for easy clean-up of wrappers.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Print the template on the first page of **Handout 2**. Cut out and wrap around a one-inch cube block, taping to secure. (If desired, you can magnify on your copier and use a larger block or box, if available.) Substitute a large foam dice, if available.

- **For 36-48 month olds:** Print out page two of **Handout 2** and affix it to a one-inch cube block.
- Keep blocks aside until you are ready to play. Have a thin marker handy if you are working with children aged 36 to 48 months.
- Identify a large space in the room where children can gather in a circle and safely make the movements shown on the cube.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity to help children understand, repeat, and use action words. This book is also a great one for rhymes if the children in your class are developmentally ready to identify rhyming sounds.

Book: *Fire Chief Fran* by Linda Ashman

As You Read:

Introduce the book and its key ideas. Look at the cover of the book together. What do children think this story will be about? Encourage them to make predictions. If children think the book will be about firefighters or fire trucks, ask them if they have seen a fire truck before. What do they think fire trucks/firefighters do?

Define new words and phrases. Explain to children that *inspected* means we look closely and carefully at something. The firefighters inspect the equipment to make sure it is working. *Dousing* means that you throw or pour a lot of water on something to get it really wet—in this case, to put the fire out.

Prompt children to repeat key phrases and pause for children to fill-in-the-blank. As the class begins to see the refrain repeated (*Then...lights begin flashing...they need to move FAST!*), pause and let children fill in the word “FAST.”

Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning. On the page where the firefighters are inspecting, ask the children: *What do you see the firefighters inspecting in the picture?* (A headlight and a tire.) On the page where the firefighters help when a tree falls down and blocks the road, before reading the text, ask children to look carefully at the illustration. What do they think the problem is? Ask them what they think the firefighters can do to help.

Identify and explore emotions. When you read about Bruno, the pup, ask children to show you where Bruno is stuck. Ask the children how they think Bruno is feeling when he is stuck (scared, frustrated) and when he is freed (relieved, happy). Have they ever felt scared or frustrated? When? What makes them feel happy?

Make connections to children’s lives. When looking at the pages with the children touring the fire station, ask the children if they have ever toured (or walked through to learn about) a fire station. What did they see and do? When you read about the baseball players getting hurt, ask children if they have ever gotten hurt and needed a Band-Aid. What happened?

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

For children from 18 to 30 months:

Gather the children in a space where they can sit comfortably in a circle or semi-circle.

Introduce the activity: *Today, we are going to be talking about the different things that community helpers do. A community helper is someone who does good things for our neighborhoods and our world. Our story, Fire House Fran, was about a special kind of community helper: A firefighter. But let’s talk about other community helpers!*

Say the rhyme as you take out the prepared cards:

Helping, helping all the time,

Which helper will we find?

Let's take a card and see:

Which helper will we be?

Pick a card from the deck. Show children the image and introduce the helper using the descriptions below:

- *A mail carrier delivers letters and birthday cards to your house.*
- *A garbage collector picks up trash to help our neighborhood stay clean and neat.*
- *A doctor helps us stay healthy and helps sick people feel better.*

Model for the children the actions performed by each helper:

- **At the mail carrier station**, model how to write on the envelope, stamp it, carry it in a bag, and deliver to one of the prepared mailboxes. Use these target verbs as you play and model the actions: **write**, **stamp**, **carry**, and **deliver**. If children are talking, prompt them to repeat or join in.
- **At the garbage collector station**, show children the crumpled paper on the floor. Show children how you sort the trash. Narrate your thinking: *I am picking up some newspaper. That goes in the box with the newspaper on the front.* Model how to **collect** the garbage. Children can also **sort** the garbage (newspaper vs. plastic). When there is no more garbage to pick up, children can dump the bins out and make a new mess!
- **At the doctor station**, give each child the opportunity to put Band-Aid(s) on the dolls or stuffed animals. They can use the tongs to take a cotton ball and wash the injuries on the stuffed animals. Use the doctor's kit props to model how doctors/nurses **care** for others, **check** where they are hurt, **wash** and **bandage** injuries, and help people **heal** (or get better).

Engage the children by sending the entire group to the station to play for five to seven minutes, monitoring for engagement. Narrate using the action words for these community roles as you observe. Children this age may not be talking much yet, but are developing a strong receptive vocabulary (the words they hear and understand). When children's interest in the center has decreased, return to the circle.

Repeat the rhyme, choose one of the remaining cards, explain the selected helper's name and role. Introduce the appropriate play station and model the helpers' actions at the station. Engage the children by sending them all to the station to play.

Repeat with the third card.

If time allows: Divide the children into equal groups to play at the stations and rotate.

Wrap-up: *Today we discovered all the things that community helpers do to make our neighborhoods a safe place to live. Who remembers a community helper from our game today?*

Review; see suggested language below. Display the cards so that children who are not yet speaking can point or gaze as you talk.

- *We pretended to stamp letters, carry the letters in our bag and deliver them to our mailboxes. We were _____ (pause—see if children will fill in) mail carriers! (Hold up the mail carrier card.)*
- *We collected trash in our classroom. We were _____ (pause—see if children will fill in) garbage collectors! (Hold up the garbage collector card.)*
- *We took care of another child and helped them feel better with a Band-Aid. We were _____ (pause—see if children will fill in) doctors! (Hold up the doctor card.)*

For children from 30 to 48 months:

Gather the children in a space where they can sit comfortably in a circle or semi-circle.

Place the helper cards you've prepared on the floor, face up, in front of the children in a random order. Keep the second set nearby to play the game.

Explain: *Today we are going to play a game about community helpers. A community helper is someone who does good things for our neighborhoods and our world. Our story, Fire House Fran, was about a special kind of community helper: A firefighter. Here are some of the community helpers we'll be talking about. Do you recognize any of these helpers from our community?* (Facilitate a conversation about children's experience with community helpers—those on the cards and others.)

Introduce the game: *For our game today, you'll choose a community helper card and then we'll see if we can find a matching card on the floor here. When the game is over, all of our cards will have matches! Let's play!*

Say the rhyme as you take out the prepared cards:

Helping, helping all the time,

Which helper will we find?

Let's take a card and see:

Which helper will we be?

Choose a child to take a card from the deck. Show children the image and ask questions like the following that are designed to prompt children to use action words:

- *Who is this community helper?*
- *What do you think they do for their job?*
- *Have you ever seen a [community helper name]? What were they doing?*

Describe the helper using the tips below:

- *A mail carrier delivers letters and birthday cards to your house.*
- *A garbage collector picks up trash to help our neighborhood stay clean and neat.*
- *A doctor helps sick people feel better.*
- *A delivery driver brings packages to our door.*
- *A police officer tells cars when to go and when to stop.*
- *A teacher shares books with children.*
- *A mechanic fixes cars when they break down.*
- *A farmer plants seeds to grow our food.*

Ask: *Who sees a match? Where's our matching helper?* (Select a child to find the matching helper card.)

Continue the game until all cards have matches.

Transition and explain: *Now we are going to pretend to be some community helpers!*

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Teach counting, quantity and comparison through a simple voting activity. Ask the children to decide which community helper station they liked best. Ask children to walk to their favorite station. Once everyone has chosen a spot, count how many children are in each group, pointing to each child as you count.

Then have each group stand in a line or sit in a row. Compare the groups by looking: "Which group has more? Which has fewer? Are any the same?" You can also restate the result:

The most children chose the _____ station! By physically grouping themselves, children can see differences in quantities and begin to make connections between concepts like more, fewer/less, and equal.

Take out the cards for the mail carrier, the garbage collector, and the doctor.

Lead the activity as described above for 18 to 30 month olds.

Wrap Up: *Today we did all the things that community helpers do to make our neighborhoods a safe place to live. Who remembers what we did at the mail carrier station? At the garbage collector station? At the doctor station? Who is your favorite helper today?*

Close with a conversation about children's favorite community helpers and what they do.

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

Position children in a circle on the carpet.

Introduce the activity: *We're going to play a game where we get to act out all kinds of action words! Are you ready to move? Let's go!*

Show children the prepared cube: *Look at my little block! What do you see on each side of the block?* (Point out the images and the text. Ask children what they see happening in each image. Then read the text underneath.)

Demonstrate how to play: *Watch! I am going to roll the cube gently on the floor. Let's see what action word comes up on top! Oh, I got "Dance"! Okay, everyone, let's dance!* (Dance with the group for 30-45 seconds.)

Choose a child to go first. They roll the cube. Point to the image: *Do you know what the child in the picture is doing?* Pause, to give them time to say or approximate the word. Then repeat it: *It says: Point to a friend!* Tell the group to say the word too (approximations or just listening is okay!).

Prompt the child to do the action for the group first; provide a demonstration if necessary. Join in yourself as a model. Use the action word as the child performs the action: *"You are [action*

Then, encourage all children to join in performing the action. Prompt the group by saying, *"Okay, now we all [action word--point]!"*

Continue until all children have had a turn to roll the dice and perform an action.

Repeat the game if children are engaged and having fun. As children become familiar with the words in this game after you play several times, pause and see if the child who rolled the cube can name the action.

Variation for children aged 30-48 months:

After playing the game as described above, take out the second prepared cube (blank).

Show children the blank cube: *Uh-oh, this game cube is blank! I need your help to fill it up with action words!*

Ask children to show or say action words that you can add to each of the cube's six sides.

Write the words down on each side. If possible, draw a simple stick figure to go with the action word. If children need ideas, you might suggest:

- Wave your hands
- High five with a friend
- Touch your toes
- Kick a leg
- Wiggle your middle
- Pretend to fly

- Pretend to swim
- Twirl
- Crawl

Play the game again with the new action words.

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children.

Say: *Today we learned about all the things that community helpers do! We also practiced acting out some action words ourselves!*

For 18 to 30 month olds: Place the 3 community helper cards where children can see them (mail carrier, garbage collector, doctor). Ask each child to show you who their favorite community helper is. Use action verbs to then describe how that helper makes the community a better place.

For 30 to 48 month olds: Place all the community helper cards where children can see them. Ask each child to show you their favorite helper and tell you what they do.

SUMMARIZE: *Today we learned new action words like deliver, collect, stamp, collect, and heal. We also used our bodies to act out action words like pointing, jumping, and dancing.*

Individualizing the Activity

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, to make the matching game more challenging, you can play it once as a group and then pair children up to play with a peer (you will need multiple sets of cards). You could also play this game as “Memory,” that is, place the cards face-down on the floor. Once children choose a card, they lift cards on the floor until they have found their match.
- For the role-playing component in Activity 1, you can model simple social scripts for each community helper—for example:
 - For mail carrier: “Here are your letters!”
 - For garbage collector: “Let’s clean this up!”
 - For doctor: “I can make you feel better!”
- In Activity 1, allow children to create shoebox “mailboxes” with their names on them. Offer a selection of writing materials and encourage children to write, stamp and deliver letters to their peers.
- In Activity 1, spread one entire set of community helper cards on the floor. Hold the card stack in your hands. Choose a card and for that card, tell children: *I am thinking of a helper who [describe their actions]. Can you guess which card I have?* Let children choose the helper they think you are describing; show your card and see if they have a match.
- In Activity 2, as you say the action word that appears on the cube, help children focus on the starting sound. For example, you can say: “Your cube says *point to a friend*. Point starts with a P and P makes the /p/ sound! Can you make the /p/ sound with me?”

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, introduce only one community helper in the card game. Add cards across the week as children become familiar with the roles and vocabulary.
- For the pretend play component in Activity 1, choose two community helper stations. Participate in the stations yourself, providing a model of pretend play. Focus on using and repeating the target vocabulary.
- In Activity 2, focus on *understanding* (receptive) skills, rather than *expressive* (speaking) skills in this activity. Look for ways that children are demonstrating understanding of the action word.
- In Activity 2, you can use the blank template to create simpler action words for children to perform, or identify actions better aligned with children's abilities.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Use the varied action words from this unit during daily routines (see box to the right). Children can learn vocabulary through stories and direct instruction, but they master those vocabulary words when they hear them in other settings and use them independently. Give children lots of opportunities to hear and practice these verbs.
- During outdoor play, notice aloud how children are moving their bodies. Children might *scramble, leap, swing, balance, stumble, hop, run, drop, crawl, climb, clamber, crawl*, etc. This is a great way to build children's vocabulary of verbs.
- Challenge children to adjust their movements—which helps them practice self-regulation and learn about comparisons (an early math measurement concept). For example, can they *sprint* and then slow-walk? Can they pretend to *sleep* and then wake up? Can they *lunge* and then stand still? Can they do a little *hop* and a big *leap*? Acting out these opposites helps children understand their meaning in their bodies and their brains!
- Describe daily activities in terms of the actions that children perform: *Pour milk, serve lunch, lie down, cuddle a teddy bear, stand in line, put on jackets, stack blocks, draw with crayons*, etc.
- You can also model adverbs for children so they begin to learn how they can adjust their actions. Adverbs include words like: *slowly, gently, carefully, excitedly, energetically, loudly, softly, safely, wildly*, etc.
- Offer the action cube game as an activity children can choose during free play.

VERBS FROM TODAY'S UNIT

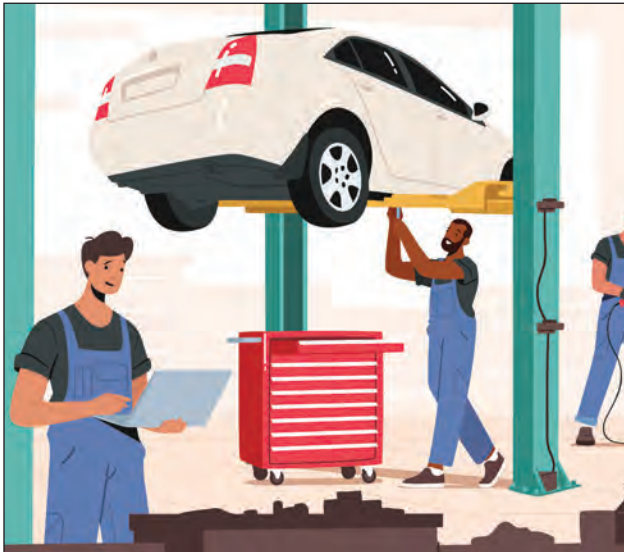
- Aim
- Bring, bump into
- Climb, collect, collide
- Deliver, douse
- Fall, flash, free
- Heal, Help
- Inspect, improve
- Lift, lunge
- Peel, practice, prep
- Read, relax
- Sleep, sprint, stir, stuck
- Waves
- Zoom

Song: *The Wheels on the Fire Truck (Wheels on the Bus version)*

Share this song with children: <https://bit.ly/4maYg5Q>

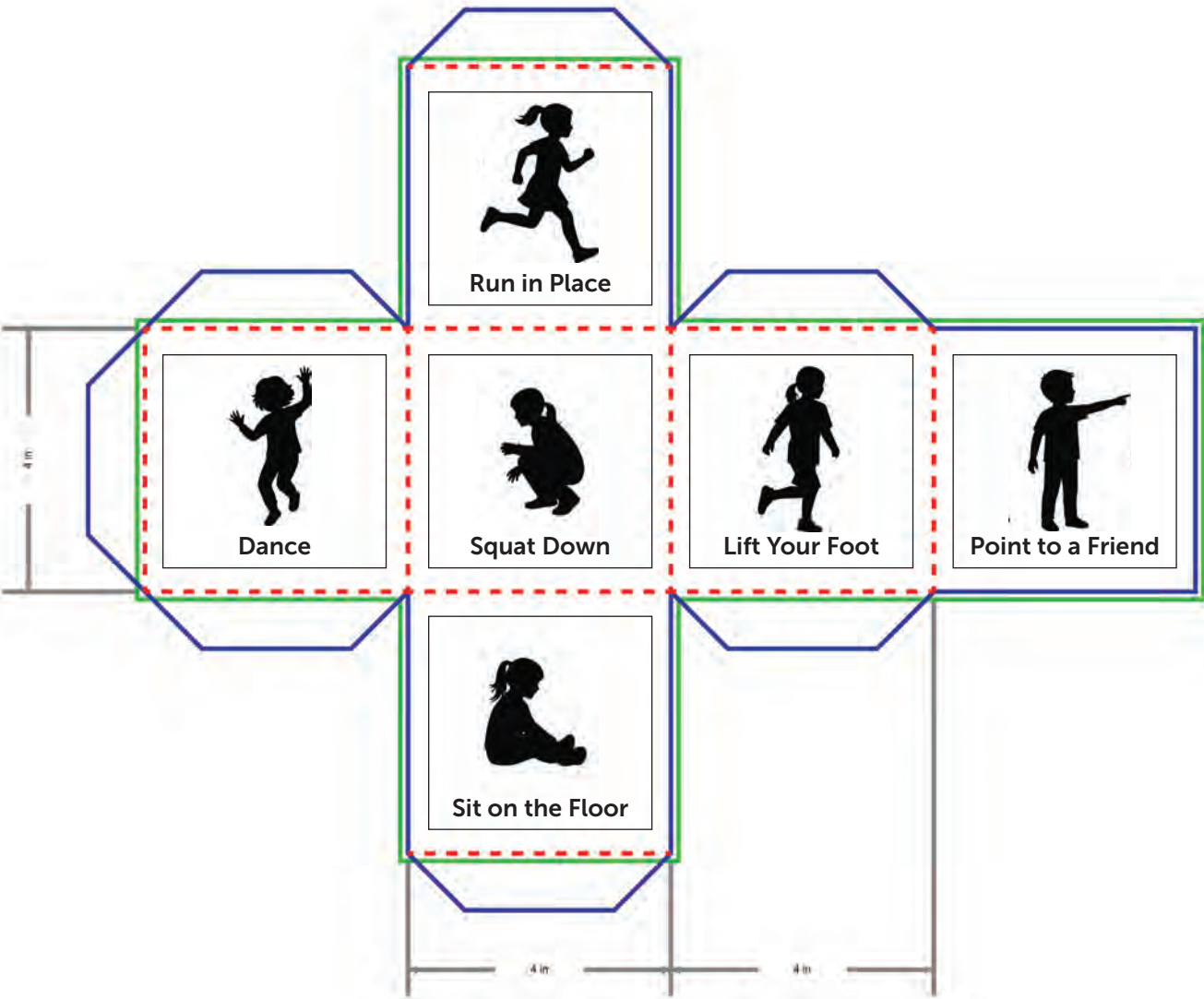
Use this Elmo-led fire truck version of *Wheels on the Bus* to help children practice the vocabulary from this unit. Model the various hand motions (*round and round, flash flash flash*, and so on) that go along with the song.

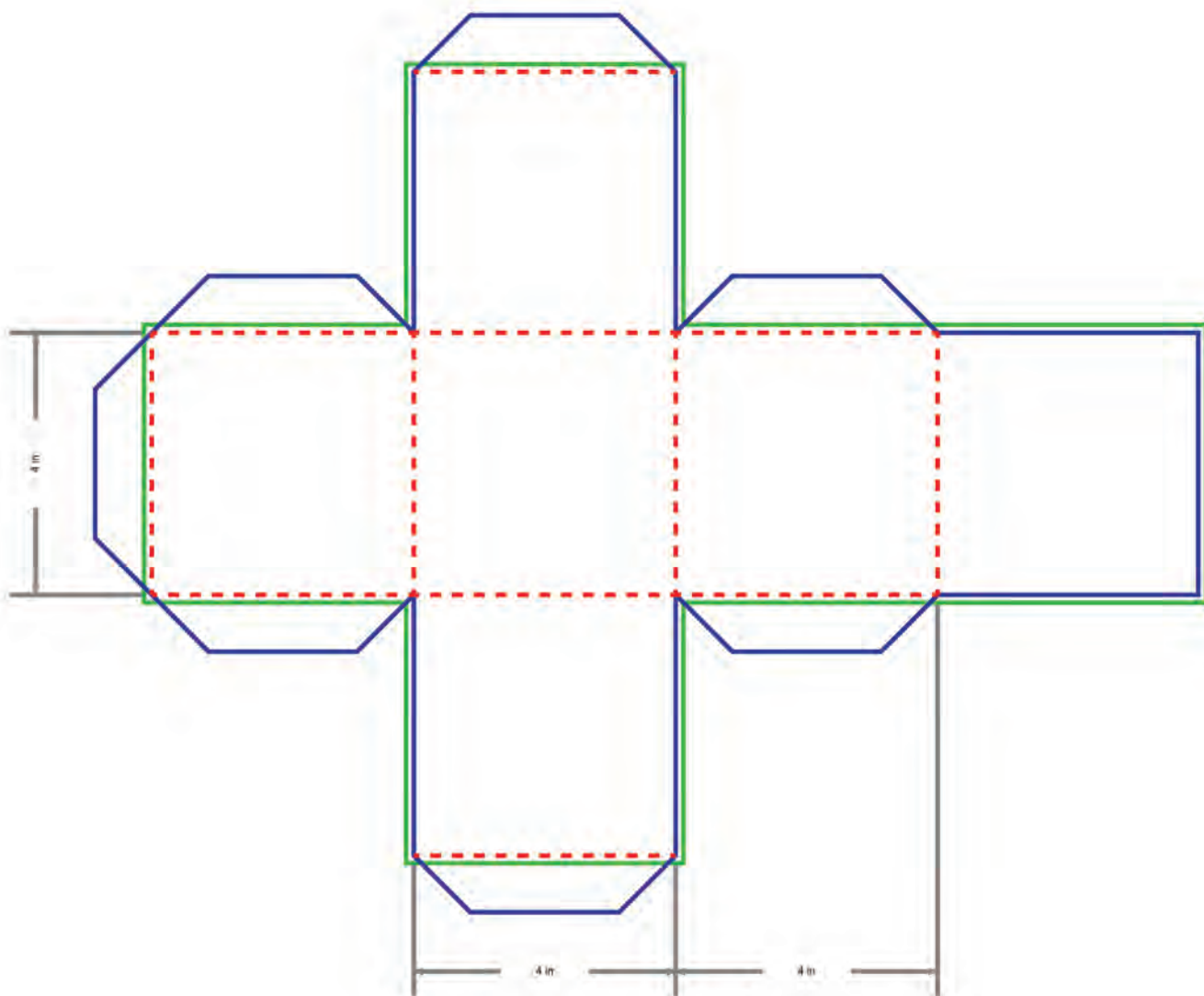
Handout 1: Community Helper Cards

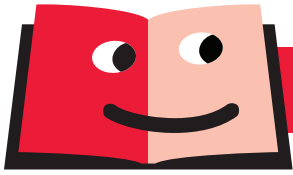




Handout 2: Action Words Game Template







Just for Families

Words for What We Do All Day

This week, children learned about community helpers and the jobs they do. We focused on learning action words – verbs – to describe what helpers do.

You can help your child learn action words too! During everyday moments, you can describe all the actions you are doing together with your child. Encourage your child to describe what they are doing and what they did during the day. For example:

Dinner Time:

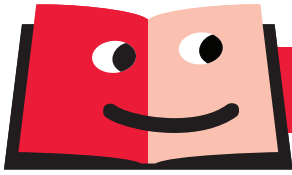
- Talk about what you are doing to cook dinner: *baking the chicken, boiling the water, stirring the sauce, measuring the rice, scooping the avocado, cutting the fruit.*
- Talk about your day and what you did: *talked to a friend, worked on a computer, lifted up boxes, painted a house.*
- Talk about the meal itself: *chewing the meat, drinking the juice, pouring water, setting the table, wiping the table, washing the dishes.*



Bed Time:

- Talk about how you get the bath ready: *turn on the water faucet, fill the tub, dampen the washcloth, squeeze out shampoo, wash their hair, dry off with a towel, rub on some lotion, put on pajamas.*
- Talk about the bedtime routine: *read stories, sing songs, talk together, climb into bed, pull up the blankets, relax their body, close their eyes, snuggle a teddy bear, and fall asleep.*

Hearing new verbs helps your child understand and describe all the action taking place around them! Having them talk about what they have been doing helps them expand their language.



Solo para familias

Palabras para lo que hacemos todo el día

Esta semana, los niños aprendieron sobre los ayudantes de la comunidad y los trabajos que hacen. Nos dedicamos a aprender palabras de acción (verbos) para describir lo que hacen los ayudantes.

¡Usted también puede ayudar a su hijo a aprender palabras de acción! En sus actividades diarias, puede describir todas las acciones que hace junto con su hijo. Por ejemplo:

La hora de la cena:

- Mencione lo que está haciendo para preparar la comida: *hornear el pollo, hervir el agua, revolver la salsa, medir el arroz, sacar la pulpa del aguacate, cortar las frutas.*
- Hable de su día y lo que hizo: *conversé con una amiga, trabajé en la computadora, moví unas cajas, pinté una casa.*
- Hable sobre la comida misma: *masticar la carne, beber el jugo, servir el agua, poner la mesa, limpiar la mesa, lavar los platos*



La hora de acostarse:

- Hable sobre cómo prepara el baño: *abro la llave del agua, lleno la bañera, mojo la toallita de lavarse, aprieto el envase del champú, te lavo el cabello, te seco con una toalla, te froto con un poco de crema, te pongo la pijama.*
- Hable sobre la rutina a la hora de acostarse: *leer cuentos, cantar canciones, conversar juntos, subirte a la cama, cubrirte con las mantas, aflojar el cuerpo, cerrar los ojos, abrazar a un osito de peluche y quedarse dormido.*

¡Escuchar nuevos verbos ayudará a que su hijo comprenda y describa todas las acciones que tienen lugar a su alrededor!