

Word Wonders Activity 3: Opposite Exploration

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Use new vocabulary to describe people and objects in their world (18 to 48 months)
- Recognize/understand simple descriptive language (18 to 48 months)
- Understand and use language that describes opposites, like new/old (36 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will explore new descriptive words (adjectives and attributes). This category of vocabulary helps children notice and describe the characteristics of objects and people. The ability to recognize the attributes of things in their world (like size, shape, and color) is also an important math skill! Hearing, learning, and ultimately using descriptive vocabulary helps children understand and participate more fully in conversations and telling stories. They develop these important language skills first by *recognizing* and *understanding* the meanings of words. Then they begin to *say* words on occasion, and then they *use* the word as part of their regular vocabulary in conversation. Repetition over time is key to learning new vocabulary.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *Kitty & Cat Opposites Attract* by Mirka Hokkanen

For Activity 1 (Engage):

Photocopies of the book's illustrations (see instructions below)

- Optional: manila folders (cut in half), glue/stapler (if you want to make images sturdier for reuse)

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Collect objects with the attributes described below:
 1. Long and short, like: two pieces of ribbon cut to different lengths
 2. Wet and dry, like: a wet sponge in a resealable bag and a dry sponge
 3. Big and little, like: a cow figurine from a play set and a baby cow figurine
 4. Full and empty, like: a full water bottle and an empty water bottle
 5. Noisy and quiet, like: rattle/shaker and cotton balls/pom-poms (in a bowl or resealable bag)
- A bag for each pair of items
- A basket that holds all bags of items

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Photocopies from the book: Make **two** copies of *each* of the following pages (so you have matching pairs). Cut the images from each page so you have, for example, a “big” image and a “little” image.

For children 18 to 36 months old prepare: noisy/quiet, big/little, wet/dry, full/empty.

For children 36 to 48 months old prepare: big/little, energetic/exhausted, asleep/awake, up/down, over/under, wet/dry, and full/empty.

- If you wish, glue/staple the images to manila folder halves to make them sturdier.
- Keep the two sets of opposite cards separate. One set will be used to display, and the other set will be used for children to select/match.
- Select a space in the classroom where there is enough room to display 4 of the pictures (for 18 to 30 month olds) or 6 pictures (30 to 48 month olds) on the floor while children are seated around them.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Put each pair of objects into its own bag.
 - If working with younger children (18 to 36 month olds), prepare noisy/quiet, big/little, wet/dry, full/empty.
 - If working with older children (36-48 months), prepare all the pairs.
 - Put prepared bags in a basket.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to help the children understand, repeat, and use descriptive vocabulary.

Book: *Kitty & Cat Opposites Attract* by Mirka Hokkanen

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** Show children the cover of the book: *What do you notice about these two cats? What is the same about them? What is different about them?* Explain that there aren't many words in this story, so children need to listen and look carefully at the pictures. The story is about an older cat welcoming a new, energetic kitten (baby cat) to the family. All kinds of adventures and mischief unfold.
- **Define new words and phrases.** On the energetic/exhausted page, provide simple definitions of these words; *energetic* means someone likes to do lots of activities and doesn't get tired, and *exhausted* means very tired. On the selfish/generous page, provide simple definitions of these words; *selfish* means that someone only thinks of themselves and doesn't care as much for others, and *generous* means that someone often gives their time or care to others, even if it's not expected.

- **Encourage prediction.** On the first page, look at the older cat asleep. Notice the young kitten. Ask children to predict if the two cats will be friends. On the over/under page, ask children to predict what will happen next to the goldfish bowl. On the very last page, who is joining the family now? What do children think will happen next?
- **Prompt children to repeat key phrases and pause for children to fill-in-the-blank.** Read the book through once, sharing just the opposite words. On subsequent reads, pause after reading the first word to see whether the children can provide the opposite.
- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning** On the *up/down* page, what happened to make the cat jump up in the air? On the *together* page, ask children if they think the cats are friends now. What clues in the picture make them think that?
- **Identify and explore emotions.** On the *grumpy/happy* page, ask children to make these expressions. Wonder together: What makes children feel grumpy? What makes them feel happy? On the *many/few* page, wonder together how the older cat feels when he only has a *few* toys and the kitten has *many*. Why do the children think the older cat leaves?
- **Make connections to children's lives.** On the *hide/seek* page, ask children if they have ever played hide-and-seek. Do they enjoy this game? Why/why not? Have any of the children in your class welcomed a new baby to their family, like the older cat welcomed the kitten? What was that like?

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Explain the game: *I have some pictures of the cat and dog in the story. We're going to see if we can find some matches!*

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Place two pairs of opposite images (4 pictures) face-up on the floor in front of children—such as asleep/awake and up/down. Keep the matching images in a stack next to you. Model how to play and share your thinking process (suggested language below) as you find the match for your picture.

Say:

- *In this game, we need to find two pictures that match, or look the same! Now I get to choose a picture. (Pick an image from the stack next to you.)*
- *Hmmm, in this picture, the cat is **asleep**. I need to find another picture that looks just like this. Does this one look the same? (Hold up the "awake" image.)*
- *Noooo, I don't think so. The cat looks **awake** here.*
- *Oh! Here's the match! In this picture (hold it up) the cat is **asleep**, and in this picture (hold it up) the cat is **asleep**! I have a match!*

Place another matching image on the floor to replace the one you used.

Choose a child to go first. Ask them to: *Pick a picture and find its match!*

Provide support/scaffolding as children work to identify their matching pair. Adapt the scripting above to assist if needed.

Model the descriptor word each time children have found their match: *You found the two pictures of a cat that is up on the table. Let's all say it: Up! Up! (Point up as you chant the word with children.)*

Model the opposite word for each match. Ask: *What is the opposite of **up**? Does anyone remember? (Point down as a visual cue.) It's **down**. **Up and down** are opposites! (Point up and down as you say these target words.)*

Continue adding images until all children have had a turn to find a match. If needed, re-use pairs.

Wrap-up by placing each image on the floor, one by one, with its opposite next to it. Name each vocabulary word shown in the pairs. Explain: *This picture shows the cat **asleep**. This picture shows the opposite of asleep, **awake**.* Pause to give children an opportunity to join in or say the word with you.

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Place three pairs of opposite images (6 pictures) **face down** on the floor in front of children—such as the asleep/awake images, the wet/dry images, and the smile/frown images.

Demonstrate how to play by going first. Share your thinking process (suggested language below) as you find the match for your picture.

Say:

- *I am going to choose a picture. Let's pick this one!* (Pick up an image and show children.)
- *Hmmm, in this picture, the cat is asleep. I need to find another picture that looks just like this* (set the picture down in front of the children).
- *Let me take a guess. I wonder if this picture will match?* (Choose a picture from the ones on the floor.) *Does this one look the same?* (Hold up the incorrect image.)
- *Noooo, I don't think so. The cat looks awake here.* (Replace the image face down.)
- **Continue choosing** pictures until you have a match.
- *Oh! Here's the match! In this picture (hold it up), the cat is **asleep**, and in this picture (hold it up) the cat is **asleep**!*
- *I have a match! Both pictures show the cat asleep! Say it with me: The cat is asleep!*

Ask: Does anyone remember the **opposite** of asleep? Is it...(pretend to wake up) – yes, awake! Awake and asleep are opposites!

Play the game. Choose a child to go first. Ask them to: *Pick a picture and find its match!* Offer up your pile of prepared images for them to choose.

Prompt children to replace images that aren't a match face-down.

Add images to the game (from those you have prepared) so there is always a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 6 pictures to choose from. You can also re-use images from the pile of those already matched.

Continue until all children have had a turn.

Model the descriptive word when children have found their match: *Do you remember the word that goes with your picture?* (Pause to let the child say the word.) *You found the two **exhausted** pictures. Let's all say it: **Exhausted! Exhausted!***

Prompt children to consider the opposite of their picture: *Do you remember the opposite of **exhausted**?* (Either show the page in the book or act out the opposite.) *It is **energetic**. Energetic and exhausted are opposites!*

Place each image on the floor, one by one. Ask the child who made the pair if they remember its descriptive word. Repeat the adjective (asleep, awake, grumpy, happy, full, empty, energetic, exhausted, big, little, over, under) and have all the children say it after you.

Explore Opposites: This time, select a picture from the ones on the floor and model how to play the opposite version of this game.

- You should go first in this round of the game as it's more complicated.

- Select an image (like “wet”).
- Name the descriptor word: *I picked **wet**!*
- Explain the task: *Now I have to find the **opposite** of wet.*
- Point to an incorrect response (*Here is the **full** picture. Wet and full—they are not opposites.*)
- Ask: *Does anyone see the opposite of wet?*
- Select the opposite image: *Here it is! Here is a picture of “**dry**.” Wet and dry are opposites!*
- Select a child to go next. They choose a picture and then find its *opposite* match on the floor. Provide support/scaffolding as needed. Engage the group by asking if they see the opposite picture. Repeat the opposite labels and prompt children to repeat them with you.
- To close, repeat the vocabulary words for each image. Ask the child holding the pairs if they remember the words for each; if so, invite them to say these words and have all children repeat.

Summarize: *Today’s story was all about an older cat who wasn’t very happy about a kitten joining the family, but by the end, they were best friends. Their story helped us learn some important new words to describe feelings and places. Does anyone remember any words from the story?*

Wait for children to share. Hold up each image and repeat the new vocabulary, with children repeating after you.

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

Introduce: *Let’s learn some new words together by using my special bags here! I wonder what’s in here... There must be some interesting new words waiting for us! Let’s play!*

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Explain: *Let’s look in my first bag and see what’s there.*

Take out the noisy/quiet items. Let children take their time to explore these items.

Observe that the shaker/rattle is *noisy*. Repeat this word and have children repeat it with you. Observe that the cotton balls are *quiet*. Repeat this keyword and have children repeat it with you.

Continue with the full/empty, big/little, and wet/dry bags. Let children explore and describe their actions. Label the items with their descriptor word.

Place the six objects on the floor in front of the children. Try to mix them up (avoid putting pairs next to one another).

Play “I Spy” with children. Get the group’s attention and say, *I spy with my little eye something that is... NOISY. Who wants to find it?* Choose a child, and after they select the item, label it again: **“NOISY”**. Have children repeat the word.

Continue playing until you have named all the objects using their adjective.

Wrap-up by having children return the items to the basket as you call on each one, say: *I spy a child holding something that is NOISY. Can you put it back in my basket? Yes, that’s it! Let’s all say it: “NOISY.”* Continue until all pairs have been put away.

Next Time: As children become familiar with these terms, consider adding new word pairs to the game. Look at the opening instructions for ideas.

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Implement the activity as outlined above. Then:

Place ten objects on the floor in front of the children. Try to mix them up (avoid putting pairs next to one another).

Play “I Spy” with children. Get the group’s attention and say, *I spy with my little eye something that is... NOISY. Who wants to find it?* Choose a child and after they select the item, label it again: **“NOISY”**. Have children repeat the word.

Continue until the objects have all been identified.

Play once more. This time, invite a child to begin “I Spy” for their peers. Prompt them to repeat the phrase, “I spy with my little eye something that is... (fill in the descriptor word).” The peer who finds the item then gets to “spy” an item for the group next.

Continue playing until the group has identified/described all the objects.

Explore Opposites: Replace all the items on the floor. Play again by saying, *I spy with my little eye the opposite of NOISY. Where is it?* When they select it, label the item: *Quiet*. Have children repeat the opposite pairs with you: *Noisy. Quiet*.

Repeat asking children to identify the opposite of the word you say until all items are identified.

Wrap-up by having children return the items to the bags as you call on each one, say: *I spy a child holding something that is NOISY. Noisy is the opposite of...(pause for child to fill in) QUIET. Can you put it back in my bag?* Continue until all pairs have been put away.

Next Time: As children become familiar with these terms, consider adding new word pairs to the game. Look at the opening instructions for ideas.

REFLECT

Return to a gathering area with the children.

Say: *Today we learned so many new words to describe the things and people we see around us. Now I am going to use some exciting words to describe each of you!*

Describe each child using a unique and exciting adjective: *curious, splendid, fascinating, tremendous, inquisitive, powerful, etc.* Feel free to use more complex adjectives, as long as you take a moment to define them.

Ask children if they would like to describe *you*. Give children a chance to practice new vocabulary.

SUMMARIZE: *Today, we learned some exciting new words and played an I Spy game of opposites. Now we have lots of different ways to describe what we see in our classroom and at home!*

Individualizing the Activity

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, you can add more images in the initial selection. Rather than 4-6, you might have 8-10. This makes the activity significantly more challenging.
- Once children have mastered the idea of the “Memory” game, make smaller copies of the illustrations on index cards. Have children do this activity in pairs while sitting on the floor. Be sure to supervise and model the descriptive language.

- For the opposites game, you can play with the images turned face down. Or you can distribute images to children, and they need to walk around and find the peer holding their “opposite match.”
- In Activity 2, make additional bags of opposites such as: rough and smooth (sandpaper and a smooth wooden block) and heavy and light (a can of food and a feather).

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, the teacher should lead the game with the group. Put only 2 pictures in the selection group—the correct image and an incorrect image. As noted, focus on only a few key vocabulary words (asleep/awake, smile/frown, wet/dry).
- In Activity 1, distribute opposite images to children and ask them to walk around and find the peer holding their “opposite match.”

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Offer the book and pictures (Activity 1 materials) as a game that children can choose during free play.
- Play opposite games outside. Invite children to run *FAST* and then walk *SLOW*. They can jump up *HIGH* or squat down *LOW*. They can take a *BIG* step and then a *LITTLE* step. Embodying these new vocabulary words and hearing them again and again across the day helps children learn.
- At mealtime, ask children to describe how their food tastes. Help them develop descriptive vocabulary beyond yummy and yucky. You can model this by using rich descriptive language yourself: *My yogurt tastes a little sweet, like strawberries. My bananas are mushy, but still yummy. And my crackers are crunchy, and their texture is a little rough when I touch them.*
- Notice what children are wearing or doing by using descriptive language. A child may have a sweater on with *blue and yellow stripes and stars at his waist*. Or a child might have *run as fast as the wind*.
- Remember that children love “fancy” words! Don’t be afraid to tell children they are *magnificent, stupendous, tremendous, outstanding, or marvelous!*
- Notice opposites in children’s environment. For example, they were *inside* and now they’re *outside*. It was *raining* in the morning, but now it’s *sunny*. Yesterday, you were *sick*, but today, you are *healthy* again.

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Compare leaves (or other objects, like pebbles, sticks, animal figurines, or toy cars) as part of a STEM activity. You can describe their *size, color, and shape* using new vocabulary.

Then use opposite language to sort these objects. For example, you can sort *BIG* leaves into one pile and *SMALL* leaves into another.

Make it harder! See if children can sort the objects again by a *different* attribute. For example, if they first sorted by size, next ask them to sort by color. This builds cognitive flexibility.

Sorting objects based on a shared attribute is an important early math skill.

Song: *The Ballad of the Opposites*

Hey little children, listen to what I say
Let's play a game of opposites today!

First can you stand up really big and tall?
Stretch up really high, like you're on a climbing wall!

(Model stretching tall, arms up high)

Now can you make yourself really, really small?
Curl way down into a little ball!
Curl way down into a little ball!

(Model crouching down into a ball)

That's it friends! Be big and small!
You know your opposites! Show them to us all.

(Make big and small poses
with the words)

Interlude: Big!....Small!... Big!....Small!

Next, can you lie down and pretend that you're asleep?
Lie very still, and don't you make a peep.

(Model lying down or
Clasping hands and eyes closed)

Now open your eyes and show that you're awake!
Stretch your arms and give yourself a shake.
Stretch your arms and give yourself a shake.

(Model opening eyes,
stretching arms, and wiggling body)

That's it friends! Be asleep and awake!
You know your opposites! Show them to us all.

(Model asleep and awake
with the words)

Interlude: Asleep!....Awake!... Asleep!....Awake!
This time, can you turn your face into a great big frown?
A frown is just a smile but turned all upside down!

(Model a big frown)

Now can you turn that frown right back into a smile?
It feels so good, let's keep it for a while.
It feels so good, let's keep it for a while.

(Model a big smile)

That's it friends! Frown and smile!
You know your opposites! Show them to us all.

(Model frowns and smiles
with the words)

Interlude: Frown!....Smile!... Frown!....Smile!

Last, can you clap your hands very, very loud?
Clapping, clapping loud, like a great big thundercloud!

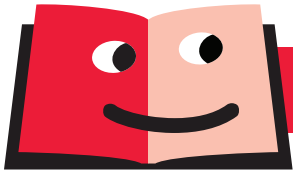
(Model clapping)

Now can you sit still and be as quiet as a mouse?
You don't make one sound in the house!
You don't make one sound in the house!

(Model sitting very still and quiet)

That's it friends! Be loud and quiet.
You know your opposites! Show them to us all.

(Model clapping and sitting still
with the words)



Just for Families

Words That Describe the World

This week, children began learning words that help them describe the people and things in the world around them. These *adjectives* help children develop a strong vocabulary and get ready for kindergarten. At home, there are lots of ways to help your child learn new words through everyday moments.

At Mealttime: Ask your child if they can take a bite of something on their plate that is *long, skinny, and green* (green beans)? Or can they take a bit of something that is *square, and brown, with yellow butter on top* (toast)? This kind of can-you-find-it game is a lot of fun and might help your child try new foods!

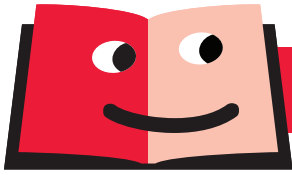
At Bathtime: Can your child point to the shampoo in the *tall, pink* container? Can they find a bath toy that is *floating*, and *red* with *blue stripes* (their toy boat)?

At Bedtime: Take a few moments at bedtime to tell your child all the reasons you love them: because they are *kind, smart, helpful, and loving*. These wonderful words are a gift for your child to hear as you separate at bedtime.

In the Car: Play “I Spy” and ask your child: “I spy with my little eye a building with a tall red roof!” Let them have a turn to give you an “I spy” challenge.



When you use interesting and descriptive language, your child is listening and learning all the time! The words *you* use become the words *they* use.



Solo para familias

Palabras que describen el mundo

Esta semana, los niños han empezado a aprender palabras que los ayudan a describir a las personas y las cosas del mundo que los rodea. Estos *adjetivos* ayudan a los niños a elaborar un vocabulario amplio y a prepararse para el kindergarten. En casa, hay muchas maneras de ayudar a su hijo a aprender nuevas palabras mediante las actividades cotidianas.

A la hora de comer: Pregúntele a su hijo si puede tomar un bocado de algo del plato que sea *largo, delgado y verde* (habichuelas). O si ¿puede probar un trocito de algo *cuadrado, marrón y con mantequilla amarilla por encima* (pan tostado)? Este tipo de juego es muy divertido y puede ayudar al niño a probar alimentos nuevos.

A la hora del baño: ¿Puede señalar el champú que hay en el recipiente *alto de color rosado*? ¿Puede encontrar un juguete para la bañera que *flota y es rojo con rayas azules* (su barco de juguete)?

A la hora de dormir: Dedíquele unos minutos a su hijo a la hora de dormir para decirle todas las razones por las que usted lo quiere: porque es *bueno, inteligente, colaborador y cariñoso*. Estas maravillosas palabras son un regalo para que su hijo las escuche mientras se separan a la hora de dormir.



En el automóvil: Jueguen al “veo, veo” y dígame a su hijo: “¡Veo con mis ojitos un edificio con un tejado alto y rojo!”. Deje que sea el turno del niño para que él le plantee a usted el reto del “veo, veo”.

Cuando usted utiliza un lenguaje interesante y descriptivo, ¡su hijo está escuchando y aprendiendo todo el tiempo! Las palabras que *usted* utiliza se convierten en las palabras que *el niño* va a utilizar.