

Word Wonders Activity 4: Race Day Adjectives

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Recognize/understand simple descriptive language (18-48 months)
- Use simple vocabulary to describe people and objects in their world (36-48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will explore new descriptive words (adjectives). 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, using, and ultimately mastering descriptive vocabulary helps children understand and participate more fully in conversations and literacy experiences. First, children will 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: *Hot Rod Hamster* by Cynthia Lord

For Activity 1 (Engage):

Handout 1: Animal Images

- Scissors (teacher only)
- Tape (for hanging pictures on the wall of the classroom)
- **Access to a color printer (*This is a requirement as the activity includes color descriptions*)
- Note: With additional preparation, Activity 1 could also be delivered as a feltboard activity.

For children aged 36 to 48 months:

- Glue sticks (1 per every 2 children)
- Blank paper (1 page for every 2 children, plus 1 for the teacher)
- Tray, 1 for every 2 children

For Activity 2 (Expand):

Handout 2: Can You Find My Monster?

- Scissors (teacher only)
- Stapler or glue (teacher only)
- Larger, 4x6" Index cards – 10
- **Access to a color printer (*This is a requirement as the activity includes color descriptions*)

PREPARATION:

For Activity 1 (Engage):

For children aged 18 to 36 months:

- Print one copy of **Handout 1** in color.
- Cut out the images. Place each set in a separate envelope or clip them together with paper clips. Have glue stick handy, if desired.

For children aged 36 to 48 months:

- Print one copy of **Handout 1** for every 2 children, plus an extra copy for the teacher.
- Cut out the images from each Handout. Place each set of images in small piles on a tray.
- Add a blank piece of paper and a glue stick to each tray. *You should have one tray prepared for every 2 children in your group, as children will work in pairs.*
- You also need one set of materials for the teacher to demonstrate the activity.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

For children aged 18 to 36 months:

- Print 6 monsters from **Handout 2** in color.
- Cut out the images and glue/staple to index cards. Set aside until needed.

For children aged 36 to 48 months:

- Print all 10 monsters from **Handout 2** in color.
- Cut out the images and glue/staple to index cards. Set aside until needed.
- NOTE: If you opt to do the activity variation where peer pairs play Can You Find My Monster, additional copies of the cards will be needed – one set of cards for every two children in your class. If you opt to do the activity variation where you play as a *Memory* game, you will need to prepare two sets of cards.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to help children understand, repeat, and use descriptive vocabulary. This story uses lots of rich descriptive vocabulary (see sidebar) that you can use across the day—not just at story-time.

Book: *Hot Rod Hamster* by Cynthia Lord

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** Show children the cover of the book: *What is on the cover? Do they see a wheel? What might this story be about?*
- **Define new words and phrases.** Explain that a *hamster* is a small furry animal that can fit in a teacher's hand and can be a pet. Ask children if they have ever seen or known a hamster. Do they know what a "hot rod" is? Explain that it's an interesting word for a fast car with a big shiny engine.

Hot rods are usually painted in bright, noticeable colors and patterns. Ask children if they have ever seen a “hot rod.” Other new words could include: *burn rubber* (go really fast), *coiled* (something is bent into a tight circle of rings, like a Slinky™), and *gleaming* (very shiny).

- **Encourage prediction.** At key moments in the story, pause to ask children what they think will happen next. For example, the hamster says they want something very FAST! Can the children make a prediction about what the hamster will do in its fast hot rod? (A clue: The text tells us that it’s “race day”...). Later, the other racers tell the hamster that his little car can’t win. What do the children think will happen in the race?
- **Prompt children to repeat key phrases and pause for children to fill-in-the-blank.** Have children join in on familiar refrains. For example, as children become familiar with the story, have them join in with you as you point to the text that reads: START YOUR ENGINES! READY, SET...GO! The children can also join in on the line: *Hot Rod Hamster coming through!*
- **Promote engagement with the book.** As the hamster makes his choices about what his hot rod looks like, pause and ask children what they would choose.
- **Identify and explore emotions.** Point to the hamster’s face as they get ready for the race to begin. What do children think the hamster is feeling right now? Have they ever felt that way?
- **Make connections to children’s lives.** Ask whether any of the children have ever seen a hot rod? Where? Would they like to have a hot rod? If so, what would it look like? Another way to connect the text to children’s lives is to use the rich adjectives introduced in the book across the day. See the box to the right for a list of adjectives to use across the day.

ADJECTIVES IN THE STORY

Small	Green	Fast	Smooth
Old	Fat	New	Thin
Shiny	Flat	Painted	Gleaming
Rusty	Coiled	Clean	Round
Itty-Bitty	Straight	Funny	Cool
Hot	Short	Wide	Scowling
Frowning	Grouchy	Bored	Tough
Tight	Silver	Gold	

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

For children 18 to 36 months old:

Explain the game: *We are going to build our own hot rod, just like Hot Rod Hamster. You’ll get to make some choices about what our car looks like—are you ready? Let’s go!*

Display the car choices on the table or floor. Ask children to choose which color car they like best. Once they’ve decided, put the other images away.

(If there is a lot of debate, you can take a vote by asking each child to put a block under their preferred choice. Have the children help you line up the blocks to see which line is longer—or has more votes. Count the blocks and say, “The larger number of children chose blue. We counted and discovered that 6 is more than 2.”)

Display the rims and have the children choose one style. Once they’ve decided, put these rims over the current wheels of the car. (Note: Tell children that the *rims* of a car hold the tire to the wheel.)

Display the fins and have the children choose one style. (*Fins can help a car go faster and also look cool!*) Place the selected fin on the back of the car.

Display the decorations and have children choose one (red flames, yellow thunderbolt, or pink heart). Place the decoration on the car door.

When your car is done, tell the “story” of your class hot rod, focusing on the descriptive words: “We made a **blue** car, with **stars** on the wheels, a **tall** fin on the back, and **red flames** on the side.” If children have the language skills, invite them to describe different parts of the car in their own words.

Play Again: Play the game a second time, offering new choices and modeling new descriptive vocabulary. This time, you can display the remaining choices from the first round.

Option: You can select a different child to choose each component of the car and play twice to give 8 children the chance to choose how to decorate the car.

*If desired, children can help you glue the decorations into place and you can display the “classroom cars” where children can see them and you can talk about them across the week.

For children 36 to 48 months old:

Use the instructions above to demonstrate how to do the activity.

Explain: We are going to make a friendship hot rod. What’s that? Well, it’s a hot rod that we make with a friend. You will work with a partner to choose what your hot rod looks like. Together, you can choose the color, rims, fin, and decoration. Let’s do it!

Place children in pairs where you have set up the different choices they can make for car color, rim, fin, and decoration. They will produce one “friendship hot rod”—making choices together to build their best hot rod.

Prompt children to ask one another which they like and discuss what to choose.

Visit pairs and ask questions about their choices, being sure to use/model descriptive words. Restate children’s responses to include descriptive words (if they don’t use them).

If needed, model social scripts like “What color do you like?” or “My turn/Your turn.”

Show children how to glue the different parts onto the car.

When the cars are done, invite each pair to “tell the story” of their hot rod. If needed, provide support around vocabulary and model descriptive words if needed.

Help children post their hot rods on the classroom walls where they can visit them throughout the week.

Wrap-up by doing a gallery walk with the children. Walk past each car as a group and invite each pair to something about their car. You can also model descriptive words: “This hot rod is blue with big red flames!”

Summarize: Today’s story was all about a hamster who really wanted to be in a race with a fast hot rod. He was determined! And even though he was small, he won the race in his tiny blue car with the silver engine and red flames! We built our own hot rods—and made lots of choices so our hot rod had all our favorite things!

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Use toy cars to practice sorting and counting. Collect up to 10 toy cars. Make sure there are 4 that are blue, 3 that are red, 2 that are yellow, and 1 that is another color. First, invite the children to help you sort the cars by color. Once you have sorted the sets, line them up. Notice together which line is the longest. Count the cars in that line. Then count the other sets of cars. Which set of cars has the *largest* quantity of cars? Which set has the *smallest* quantity of cars? Can children put these sets in order from largest to smallest?

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

For children 18 to 36 months old:

Introduce: We’re going to play a game called Find My Monster – I’m going to describe a monster and we will try to find it. Let’s play!

Place the six monster cards face up where all children can see them.

Say: *Wow, look at these monsters! (Give children time to look at the 6 images.) Can you show me or tell me which monster is your favorite?*

Demonstrate how to play: *I want you to listen to me tell you something about my monster. Then you have to Find My Monster – you can show me by pointing or by telling me.*

- *Find a monster that is red.*
- If a child is able to find the red monster right away, validate their choice: *Yes, that monster is red. You found it!*
- If children cannot find the red monster, model reasoning skills. You can:
 - Select two monster cards (one correct, one incorrect) and place them in front of the children. Say: *Let's look at these two monsters. Who sees a red monster? Where is the red monster—show me?*
 - Choose an incorrect monster and say, *We are looking for my red monster. Is this monster red? No, it can't be right. This monster is yellow.* Move to the correct object. Again, say: *I'm looking for a monster that is red. Is this monster red? (Wait for children's response.) Yes, it is! We found it!*

After the demonstration, choose a child to go first. Remind them to listen to your clue. Let the children in the group know that they can help too!

Offer a clue: *"I'd like you to find a monster that is..."* See below for items and descriptions.

Repeat the clue as needed, using the strategies above to scaffold children's selection if they need support. You can also prompt the group to help: *Does anyone have ideas? Does anyone spy something that is (description)?*

Some suggested monster descriptions are below: *I am looking for a monster who...*

- Has one eye
- Has long teeth
- Has a pink tongue sticking out
- Has pointy horns
- Has spiky orange fur
- Is green with no feet
- Looks worried
- Has many eyes
- Has a happy smile
- Has round ears

NOTE: This activity lends itself nicely to adjusting the difficulty of the clue to the child's current language and skills. Be intentional and thoughtful about the clues you offer. For example, you might give color clues (yellow monster, green monster) for younger children who are working on mastering color names. Older toddlers may be ready for more complex descriptors (pointy horns).

Turn the monster over when children have successfully identified it.

Continue playing until all monsters have been "found."

For children 36 to 48 months old:

Implement the activity as outlined above, but with all 10 monster images. See below for two options for added challenge in this older group.

Option 1: After you play the game one time as described above, invite children to take turns describing a monster. Encourage peers to find it.

Option 2: Pair children up to play. Make additional copies of the monster cards and place children in pairs or small groups to take turns describing the monsters. They can turn the cards over when they have “found” each one. The game is over when all monsters have been found.

Option 3: Switch the game from “Find My Monster” to “Find My Friend.” Have the children sit in a circle. Play the game as described above, but describe a child in the group this time—examples of adjectives below:

- Find someone wearing a **red** sweater.
- Find someone with **long** braids.
- Find someone with **blue and orange** sneakers.
- Find someone with **short** hair.
- Find someone wearing a shirt with a **dinosaur** on it.

Wrap-up by having children show you their favorite monster and tell you something about it. Re-state the children’s thought using descriptive words if they do not use them (for example, if the child says, “this one is my favorite,” you can re-cast by saying, “So you like the red one with two sharp teeth!”)

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.*

Describe the cars the children created and the monsters the children found in the game.

Ask: *Now I’d like you to tell me something about you today. Tell me something about your shirt, shoes, or hair.*

- Give each child a turn to use a descriptive word to describe something about themselves; provide support if needed—for example, suggesting they name the color of their shoes or the length of their hair: *Is it short or long?*
- If children do not yet have the language skills to do this, you can do it for them: *Layla, you are wearing a shirt with big white polka dots. Can you point to them?*

SUMMARIZE: *Today we learned some exciting new words when we built our hot rods and played Can You Find My Monster. 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 have children (in groups) build their own cars out of large cardboard boxes. Offer choices of paint or construction paper colors, stickers, shiny foil squares, paper plate wheels, and steering wheels, etc. As children work, prompt them to talk through their choices using descriptive words.
- In Activity 2, you can print out photos of the children and turn these into cards. Children can play the game with images of their peers.

- In Activity 2, you can also switch the rules of the game to play it as *Memory* vs. matching. Using two sets of the cards, place one set face down on the floor in front of the children. Children will choose a card from the deck and attempt to find their match among the cards on the floor. As children choose their card, prompt them to describe the kind of monster they are looking for: *Orange with spiky fur*. Then describe the card they turn over: *Oh, you found the green monster with a small pink tongue!*

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, the teacher can lead the game, prompting the group to make choices along the way. Consider modifying this activity for a feltboard (i.e., attaching hook-and-loop fasteners to the back of each image) so that children can easily make/change their choices and construct their vehicle on the board.
- In Activity 2, keep the number of monsters smaller—no more than 3-4 for younger toddlers. Alternatively, skip the guessing part of the game and instead, ask each child to point to their favorite monster. Then describe the monster using adjectives and rich descriptive language.
- In Activity 2, you can also adjust the activity to focus on matching skills by making a second set of cards. Have children choose a card and describe the monster they see. They can find their “monster match” from the cards on the floor. If they are unable to find the match, talk through your thought process as you scaffold their participation: *Hmmm, our card has an orange monster with spiky fur. Let’s look at this monster. Is he orange? No, he is green, so he’s not the right monster.* Continue until you have found the match.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

- Offer the *Find My Monster* materials (Activity 2) as a game that children can choose during free play. If you adapted the *Hot Rod* activity for the feltboard, make that a free play choice as well.
- When you go outside, describe the weather using rich descriptive language: hot, warm, cool, cold, or frigid. Notice wet rain, damp fog, hot sun, cool shade, sticky snow, or freezing ice.
- When you call children to get in line or transition between activities, use “clues” to describe the child you have in mind. This achieves two goals: models descriptive language and turns transitions into a game. For example: “The next person to go to the lunch table is someone wearing **red** sneakers that have a **bright** light on the soles.”
- As you take walks through your building or the neighborhood, describe what you see: *tall ceilings, square tiles, gray walls, red brick, yellow signs, red stop sign, etc.*
- During block building, take pictures of children’s structures and print them on a page. Ask the builder to describe their creation and transcribe their words to the page. Prompt them to think about height (*tall or short*), width (*wide or narrow*), size (*big or small*), color of blocks, etc. They can also describe how they like their structure: it may be *beautiful, amazing, or awesome*. These are all rich descriptive words!
- Try doing a stretching or child yoga experience and intentionally use descriptive language during this activity. Children can do *gentle* stretches to their toes or reach their arms up *high* to the sky. They might try *slow* breaths or stretch their arms out *wide*.

Song: *Race Car Song*

- Share this song with children: <https://bit.ly/4sIZEP4>
- Encourage children to join in with the lyrics: *Vroom, Vroom, Race Car!*
- Prompt children to do some the actions pictured in the video: Putting on one’s seatbelt, waving the flag, pretending to drive.

Handout 1: Hot Rod Choices





Rims—Star pattern, Curved lines, Straight lines



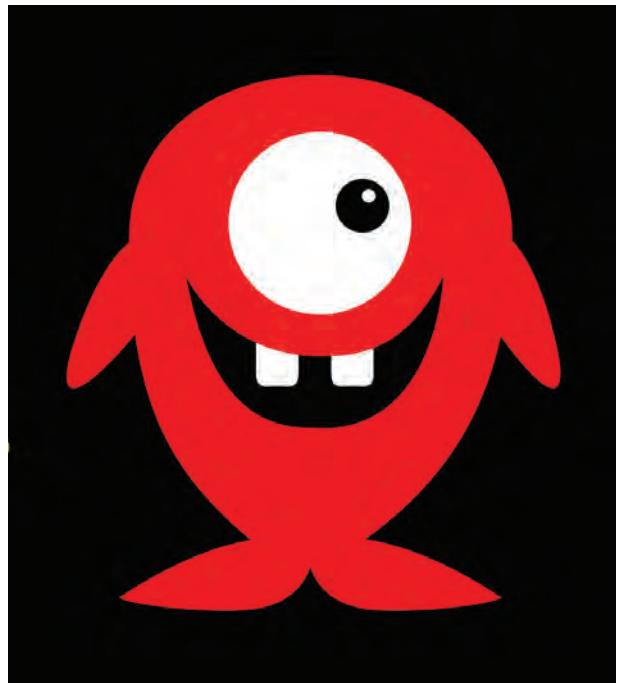
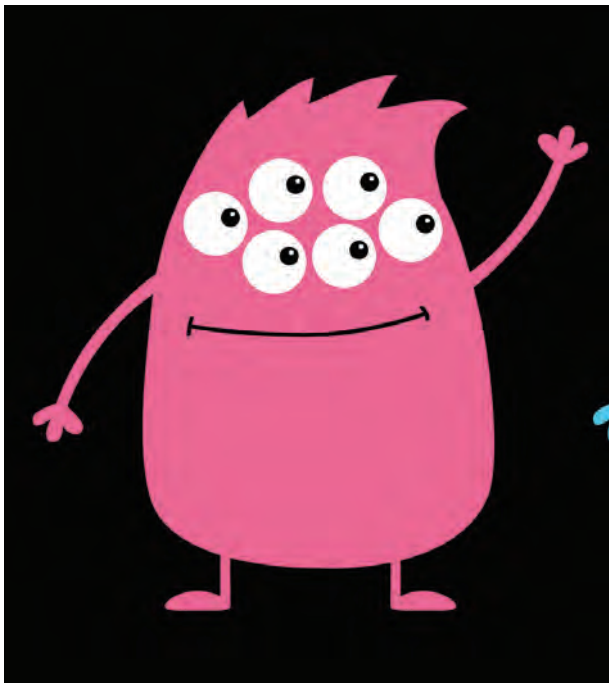
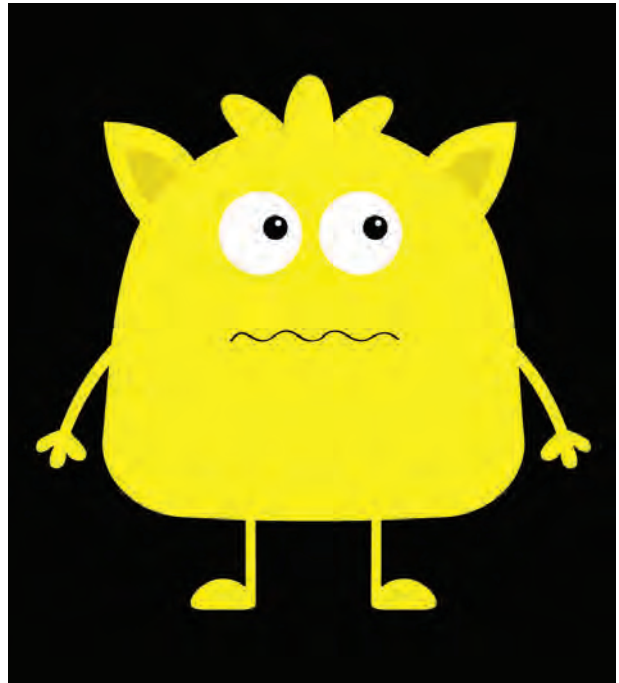
Fins—Narrow, Wide, Tall

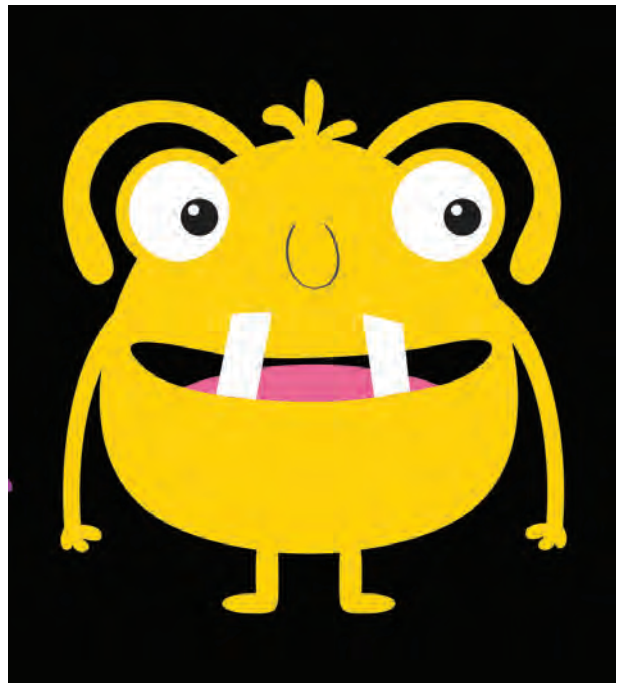
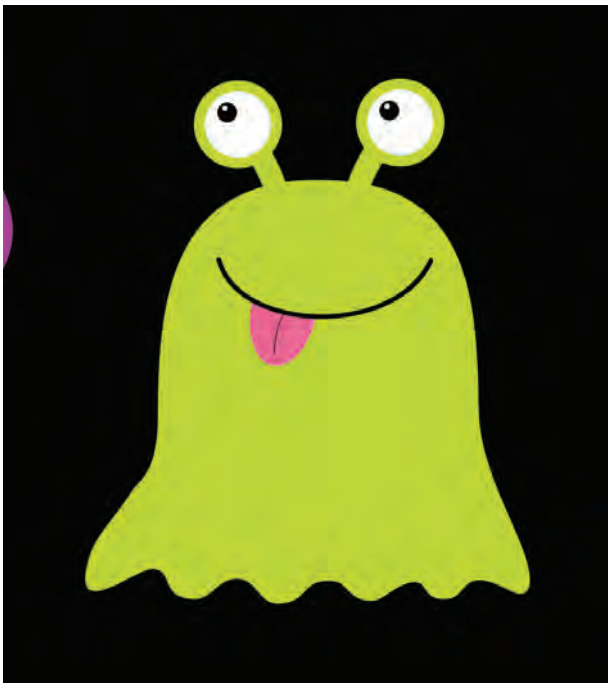
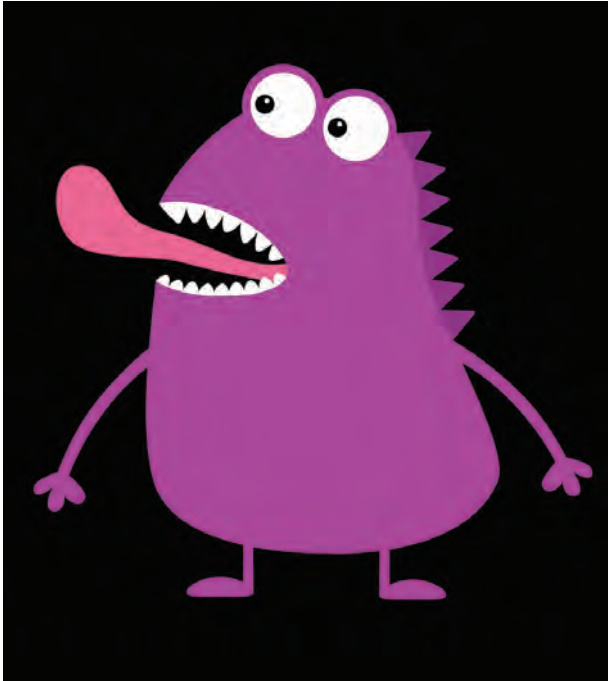


Decoration—Red Flames, Yellow Thunderbolt, Pink Polka-Dot Heart

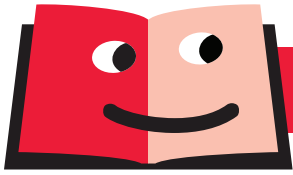


Handout 2: Can You Find My Monster?









Just for Families

My Vocabulary Is Growing Just as Fast as Me!

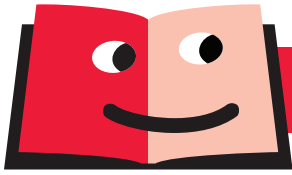
This week, children practiced using new words to describe the people and things they see around them. These *adjectives* help children develop a strong vocabulary and get ready for kindergarten. At home, folding laundry and getting dressed are two great routines where children can practice using lots of adjectives.

When you are folding laundry, invite your child to “help.” Play an I-Spy game where you say, “I spy a little red sock. Can you find it?” This kind of game gives your child lots of practice hearing and learning new vocabulary. Once they are talking, give them a turn to tell you a clue!

When you are helping your child dress, give them two choices and talk about each one using adjectives. For example: “Do you want the white shirt with blue dogs on it? Or do you want the green shirt with narrow yellow stripes?” Or “Do you want your blue, striped pajamas? Or do you want your red pajamas with big, silly dinosaurs?”

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

¡Mi vocabulario está creciendo tan rápido como yo!

Esta semana, los niños practicaron el uso de palabras que describen a las personas y las cosas del mundo que los rodea. Estos *adjetivos* ayudan a que los niños desarrollen un vocabulario extenso y se preparen para el jardín de infancia. En la casa, doblar la ropa limpia y vestirse son dos rutinas ideales para que los niños practiquen el uso de muchos adjetivos.

Cuando esté **doblando la ropa limpia**, invite a su hijo a que le “ayude”. Jueguen al juego “Veo, veo”, en el que usted dice: “Veo una media roja. ¿Puedes encontrarla?”. Este tipo de juego le da a su hijo mucha práctica para escuchar y aprender vocabulario nuevo. Una vez que empiece a hablar, ¡deje que sea el niño quien le da una pista!

Cuando **ayude a su hijo a vestirse**, ofrézcale dos opciones y haga comentarios sobre cada una de ellas utilizando adjetivos. Por ejemplo: “¿Quieres la camiseta blanca con perritos azules? ¿O prefieres la camiseta verde con rayas amarillas finas?”. O bien: “¿Quieres tu pijama azul con rayas? ¿O prefieres tu pijama roja con dinosaurios grandes y traviesos?”

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 utilizará.

