

Fun Games and Activities to Help Learn Key Words

Key Word Snap

To play snap you will need two of each key word on individual pieces of paper, shuffle them and divide out between at least two players, then take it in turns to lay down a word. If the words match say "snap" the child tries to read the word. Initially help may be required, so either sound out the word, or the beginning of the word, until it should become more instant to read it.

Key Word Pelmanism

To play pairs you will need two of each word on individual pieces of paper or card. Put all the cards face down, and then simply turn over two cards till you get a pair. Once you get a pair try and sound out, or read the word. This helps with memory too, as you try to remember where you saw the word before. The child could play this game on their own, or it can be played as a game with two people taking it in turns to turn over two words. Everytime you get a match, pick those words up and you keep them, the winner is the person with the most sets of pairs.

Ask a Question

To help learn the key words you can also play ask a question. Pick five to ten keywords to learn, making sure they are ones that you can use as an answer. Some more obviously lend themselves to this, but most of them can be, if you think creatively. Then ask your child a question and they pick the right answer from their key words. So if one of your keywords is cat, a question like, 'what purrs?', and they have to pick cat from the 5 keywords they have.

Sentences and Pictures

Once you get more words you can also make sentences and draw a picture to go with it. You can do this in various ways. You can put the keyword cards together to make a sentence, something like, 'the cat is big', and the child draws a picture of what is on the cards, or the other way round the adult could draw the picture and the child puts together a sentence from their words to describe it. This activity also helps the child to not just see the words in isolation.

Book Detectives

To also help not see words in isolation, and as part of reading, it's useful to get the child used to seeing the key words in books. So they aren't just words you have to learn, but there is a purpose to learning them. So initially pick just one key word the child is going to read in the book, then find a book that has a few of that word in, preferably a book they are interested in, or even comic, magazine whatever interests them. You read to them, guide under the words with your finger and they read all the keywords. They may need prompting, especially initially, but in time they will come to spot the word themselves. Once they have got used to spotting one word, you can move onto spotting more, and eventually you can progress onto reading together.

Words around the House

You can also stick the key words around the house, start with just one or two, our keywords can be printed out for this purpose. Initially the novelty of the words around, can mean the child will try to read them. Put them in places where they are normally doing something quiet, like in a bathroom, for when on the toilet and in the bath, or the hallway for when they are putting their shoes on.

Let's Get Active with Key Words!

If they are an active child who learns more by doing, and you have a couple of words up around the house, you can get them to run to the word and back to you see how quick they can do it, and they have to try and get the right word. Another way to help this type of child is stick the words on the trampoline if you have one, or ride their bike or scooter to the correct word and back to you, or similar to hopscotch except with words instead of numbers, where they jump or hop on the words you are saying. Also using cars, trains, trucks in play to drive to the right word too.

It's worth trying out a few of the different ways, as children get on with different methods depending on their learning style, and at different stages of their development. If you can find a way of introducing it into their interests that is a big help too, we learn better when something is fun, we want to do it and it interests us.

Learning these keywords and learning to read can take days, weeks, months or years, it varies so much from child to child. If they are struggling with the activities and keywords to begin with, you helping them and telling them will help, as that is reinforcement in itself. Or if the whole word is too hard to begin with just start with the beginning sounds and add to it. The idea is to try and make it fun, you want to switch your children onto developing an interest in words, and ultimately, a love of learning to read.