



## Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

# Word Finding Difficulties

We all experience times when we can't think of a word, but 'know it' and know how frustrating that can be. Difficulties can occur for some children in the learning of words leading to limited vocabulary, vocabulary errors and word finding issues. Just hearing a word, even several times, does not mean the child has included it in their vocabulary. It is important to be aware of the impact that these difficulties can have on self confidence, learning and communication and know how to help.

**There is no specific solution to helping a child who is stuck for a word, a variety of approaches may be useful and it is often a case of trial and error to see what works best for the individual child:**

- Ask your child if they have forgotten the word and offer help by asking 'Are you stuck?' or 'Would you like some help with this word?'
- Reassure them and boost their confidence by saying 'I know you know the word, don't you?... You just can't remember it right now.'
- Ask them to describe the thing they are thinking of. If appropriate, repeat 'clues' back, to help them build up a better 'picture' in their mind of the word they are trying to remember
- Ask if they know if it is a long word or a short word.
- Ask if they can think of the first sound / what it begins with.
- If you know the word they are trying to say, tell them the first sound.

- Give your child some time to think. Don't keep jumping in with suggestions
- Once the child has remembered a word, repeat it and ask them to say it again. This reinforces both sound structure and word meaning.
- Your child may, in time, be able to voice their difficulties, e.g. "I'm sorry, I can't remember the word/ don't know the word" rather than just struggle on at length.

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about your child's talking you can :

- Try suitable interventions for promoting vocabulary development such as Word Aware and Talk Boost
- Look on our website for the 'Quick Reference Guide'. This will guide you when the best time to refer your child to Speech and Language Therapy. The referral forms and further advice sheets are also available on the website <https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/childrens-therapy-referral/>
- You can access further information from the following websites:  
<https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/common-features-of-slcn>  
<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk> Go to 'Resources - Resources for Practitioners' and look for 'Universally Speaking ages and stages of children's communication development for children ages 8 – 18'.  
[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk) – what to look for in older children and teenagers – afasic  
[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk) - Look for the resource called 'Speech, Language and Communication in Secondary Aged Pupils'.

For schools - refer to our training sessions

- Working with Children with Vocabulary Difficulties.
- Introduction to Working with Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs in the Inclusive Classroom.
- Elklan 5-11 and 11-16 Language Training.