

Games for Developing Language

BARRIER GAMES

Barrier games are particularly good for promoting listening, understanding, expressive language and vocabulary. These games involve someone telling someone else, who is behind some sort of barrier, what to do. The idea is that because they can't see what the other is doing or has got, they have to give very clear, precise instructions and listen very carefully. The games can involve instructions to build something with bricks or to draw or colour something in, or descriptions of objects, pictures or books to be chosen or identified and so on.

Here are some useful websites and resources which have ready-made barrier games:

- Barrier Games book and CD

<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/barrier-games-book-and-cd-p2124>

- Search 'barrier games' on Twinkl

<http://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-e-191-barrier-games-pack>

- Use Pinterest or the internet and search for 'printable barrier games'.

Although these next activities have been divided into sections, most of them will involve elements of comprehension, expression and vocabulary.

VOCABULARY

These games reinforce the vocabulary you are working on by repeating the words lots of times and giving children plenty of opportunities to say the words themselves.

- **Pass the object:** everyone has to take a turn to say something about an object or picture.
- **Kim's game:** how many objects can you remember? Talk about how you can remember them more easily if you think of reasons to group some together in your mind.
- **My auntie went to market and bought...** Think of items within a category.
- **Collecting counters:** put a counter in your pot every time I say a word that belongs to your category.
- **Making lists:** List all the things you need to make a sandwich; go to the beach; paint a picture; animals on the farm etc.
- **20 questions.** You may need to work on asking questions first.
- **What am I?** This helps children practise simple definitions.
- **Word associations:** take turns to say a word that is somehow associated with the word the last person said.

- Using **written texts**, choose a word and make lists of synonyms/alternatives for that word.
- Make **scrapbooks**, with separate pages for different categories.
- **Odd one out**. Put together objects or pictures and take turns to talk about which go together and which is the odd one out, and why it is.
- Make **word webs** on cards for topic vocabulary, with drawings, words, symbols etc to show how the topic words are linked and to allow opportunities for the children to discuss what the words mean, how they relate to each other and how to say the words.
- **Describing unfamiliar objects**. You may not know what something is, but you can describe it and suggest what it might be for etc
- **Word lists**. Think of as many items as you can from one category (e.g. vehicles) as you can in one minute.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

To simplify these activities:

- talk about the 'here and now'.
 - give the child simple instructions ('Jump on the mat') and then ask them to tell you what to do.
 - tell and retell simple, repetitive stories etc
- Take turns to say something on a specified subject (e.g. pets). The next person has to ask the speaker a relevant question before making their own contribution.
 - Take turns to give instructions, such as 'If you have a red car, clap your hands.' 'If you had cereal for breakfast, count to 10.'
 - Start sentences for children to finish: 'I like sausages but. . .' 'When I was 6. . .' 'If I was taller. . .'
 - Take turns to explain similarities/differences between things (comparing): A tennis ball and an apple; an aeroplane and a helicopter; a spoon and a fork etc.
 - Lead discussions on open topics, such as how much pocket money should children get (it depends on what they have to use it for, how old they are, how good they've been etc)
 - Match pairs of objects/pictures and say **why** they go together. Teams could win points for each reason they think of. E.g. A knife and fork go together because they are both cutlery, you find them in the same drawer, they are both made of metal, both could be dangerous etc.
 - Use colour coded question cards to help structure narrative skills, whether it is just telling someone what happened in the playground, telling your news, retelling a story or making up a story.
 - Do paired work to allow opportunities for peer talk. They can then tell others what they did.
 - Join in play with children and take on a role so the children learn about the language of that situation and role.

- Act out stories.
- Allow talk to happen. E.g. if someone gets glue on their hands, talk about what it looks like, ask them how it feels or just point and say 'oh!' and see what the child says.

COMPREHENSION

To simplify these activities:

- use short simple sentences; simple one action instructions
 - focus on early concepts
 - keep the focus on practical, concrete tasks.
- Use building bricks to give instructions for construction. E.g. 'Put the small red brick behind the long white one.' You could use lego or duplo – one person has a picture/the instructions of what needs to be made and the other has the bricks.
 - Work on the concepts of space, time, size, direction, emotions etc that they will need to understand the language in the classroom. Sort long vs. short pencils, order sizes of balls, play robots and give instructions with backwards, forwards, sideways etc.
 - Use reciprocal reading to discuss what words and sentences mean, how the text is developing etc. Try and demonstrate how else you could say it; compare where you've heard it before etc.
 - Listen to stories and then act scenes out.
 - Describe a simple sequence of actions for a child to act out, like Simon Says, but several actions in one instruction. Try using words and phrases like: 'Don't jump and wave your arms until I say 'Go!'; 'Before you touch your nose, stamp your foot.'; Count to 10 while you rub your tummy.' Etc.
 - Target key concepts for classroom topics: make posters of 'mind maps' with key words highlighted in the middle of the paper and links to other words drawn on. Pictures can be added to focus on the meaning of the word with colour coding to emphasize connections.
 - Develop and encourage use of strategies to aid understanding in the classroom: Help children identify key concepts/words in instructions, questions and other sentences (a very useful study skill). E.g. 'Right everyone, I want all of red group's maths books on my table.' Help them draw pictures or write notes of these ideas, and get them to picture in their heads what they've done. Write out a sequence of instructions and read them out. Cut them up and then ask the children to put them back in the right order.
 - Play active listening games to encourage children to take responsibility for their own understanding: understanding what listening involves; acting upon what they hear; spotting mistakes; identifying why they couldn't hear what you said (e.g. you were speaking too quietly); understanding what good listeners do when they are listening etc.

Ann Forrester, Speech and Language Therapy – July 2016