

## Concepts – including Prepositions and Adjectives

Linguistic concepts are words used to describe abstract ideas e.g. positions – in, on, under and size – shorter and taller.

### Section 1: Developing Understanding of Concepts

#### Why are concepts important?

Concepts help children to become more effective communicators and comprehend the language used in day to day communication and across the curriculum.

#### How do I support children's understanding of concepts?

Like all language, children develop their understanding of concepts through experiences in which the language is modelled. When planning, practitioners need to consider the concepts which children need in order to access the learning. The understanding of these concepts should not be presumed and therefore practitioners should plan concrete modelling of these concepts in context.

#### How do I introduce a new concept? – introducing the concept of 'round'

When playing and talking together, comment on objects which are 'round' using gesture where possible – this exposure may be enough for some children to understand and begin to use the concept.

#### If children require further explicit exposure to the concept, consider the following:

- ❖ **Step 1:** gather objects/ pictures which are 'round', e.g. a ball, a tambourine, a wheel etc.
- ❖ **Step 2:** allow the children to explore the objects whilst the adult models the concept, using gesture where possible
- ❖ **Step 3:** gather objects/ pictures which are 'not round' e.g. a box, a triangle, a piece of paper etc.
- ❖ **Step 4:** allow the children to explore the objects for 'round' and 'not round' whilst the adult models 'round' and 'not round'
- ❖ **Step 5:** children to organise objects into round and not round
- ❖ **Step 6:** children consolidate their understanding through a range of everyday experiences and planned activities (suggestions for activities are included in Section 2 of the guidance).

#### Be Careful with Opposites

In our daily interactions with adults we often use opposites to help explain new concepts; however, we know this can be confusing for children. When learning new linguistics concepts they should be introduced one at a time, avoiding the teaching of opposites. For example, when introducing the size concept of 'deep', if you need to use a comparison, use 'not deep' instead of 'shallow'. Once the understanding of 'deep' and 'shallow' have been developed independently, you can then use opposites to support generalisation.

## Comparison Concepts

When introducing comparison concepts, e.g. ‘tall, tallest, taller, taller than’ and ‘fast, fastest, faster, faster than’ the children need to:

1. First make sure children understand the underlying concept, e.g. “tall”
2. Next introduce the “est” concept, e.g. “tallest”
3. Then introduce the “er” concept, e.g. “taller”
4. Finally introduce the “than” concept e.g. “taller than”.

## Concept Categories

Some of the linguistic concept categories you may explore are:

- **Colour**, e.g. dark, red, lightest
- **Direction**, e.g. up, left, forward etc.
- **Emotions**, e.g. nervous, elated, angry
- **Position**, e.g. in, beside, between etc.
- **Quantity**, e.g. more than, empty, fewer etc.
- **Sequence**, e.g. first, after, finally
- **Properties**, e.g. floating, opaque, viscous, liquid
- **Size**, e.g. ginormous, smallest, larger
- **Texture**, e.g. spikey, soft, smooth
- **Time**, e.g. today, summer, lunchtime.

## Developmental Nature of Concepts

When introducing new concepts, practitioners should take into consideration that concepts which are used more frequently in every day interactions, and those which are most concrete, will be the easiest to learn e.g. most children will develop their understanding of ‘yellow’ as a concept before understanding the concept of ‘ochre’ due to the frequency of exposure to ‘yellow’.

## Section 2: Use Concepts with Understanding

Once children have been introduced to the concept (**Section 1**), activities such as these can be used to consolidate children's understanding in a range of contexts.

### Bear House

This can be used to consolidate prepositions, colours and size. With a selection of bears (figures or pictures) and plastic cups decorated to look like a house, the materials can be used to create a narrative in which the children demonstrate their knowledge of the concepts in the narrative.

*This is Big Red Bear. This is Little Blue Bear. This is Big Green Bear. This is their house.*

*One morning, Big Red Bear was in his house. Show me Big Red Bear in his house. It was raining and there was a hole in his roof. He was going to get wet. He phoned Little Blue Bear who came round to help. Little Blue Bear went on top of the house. Show me Little Blue Bear on top of the house... etc.*



### Preposition Musical Chairs

This activity can be used to consolidate prepositions. The game has the same rules as musical chairs. Before each round the teacher should give one of the prepositions:

e.g. "The children are on the chairs"

"The children are under the chairs"

"The children are in front of the chairs".

When the music stops, the children will show that preposition.

### Preposition Action Figures

With a selection of action figures or toys and plastic cups the adult can place the figures in relation to other figures and the cup(s).

Adult to model, 'The pig is beside the duck'. The adult can then set up another scenario, e.g. the fox is inside the cup 'Where is the fox?'

Following this the children can then create their own scenario and describe what they have created:

e.g. 'The duck is inbetween the pig and the fox'.



## Describe Me: Obstacle Course

Using different pieces of equipment the children can demonstrate a preposition of their choice. Their job is then to share with others what they are doing.

“I am on top of the bench”

“I am behind the horse box”

“I am between the cones”.



## Adjective Poems

Outside, children gather a selection of different materials and talk about what the items look like. They can then create a poem using their descriptions.



In this example:

The children cut out numerals 1-5 and collected a variety of items. They described them to a partner. As a group they talked about what things looked like and what they felt like as they had been learning about their senses.

One of the poems they created:

- 1 squiggly bit of bark
- 2 straight pieces of garden cane
- 3 soft pieces of moss
- 4 old pine cones
- 5 small stones

## Feely Hands

With a selection of different materials, the children can create a feely hand. Once they have created their hands the adult can model what the hand feels like (and how it looks):

e.g. *‘My hand feels soft and it has round black spots on it.’*

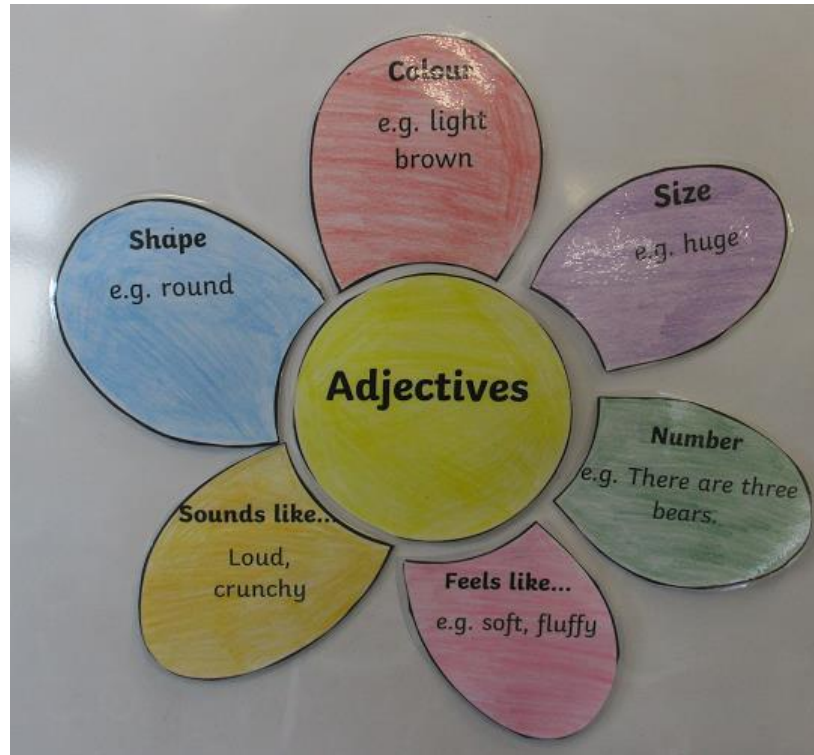
Children can then share what their hand feels and looks like. This could also be used to get children to identify one of the hands:

e.g. *‘I’m looking for the hand that feels soft and it is brown with black spots on it.’*



## Adjective Flower

The adjective flower can be used once children have developed the language of adjectives or for the adult to introduce new language.



The petals can be used and referred to when modelling or when the children are generating their own descriptions.

When sharing texts with children, the adult can give the children a tour of the page. This can be modelled first by the adult:

*"Look, I can see a hat. It is a purple hat".*

*"Wow! Look at the huge gorilla next to the tiny mouse."*

Children can then describe something which they see on the page.

When sharing an object/ picture with the children the adult can model:

*"This leaf feels smooth on one side and rough on the other side."*

Children can then have the opportunity to describe other objects.