**Strategies to help word finding skills**

**When the child cannot remember a word:**

1. Encourage the child to tell you something about the word, i.e., its function, location, category, appearance or attributes, e.g., “What do you do with it?”, “What colour is it?” etc.   
     
   See below for areas to consider. You will not be able to ask all the questions for every word. If the child cannot answer the questions give them suggestions of answer to expand their knowledge for next time.
2. If you know the word that they are trying to remember:   
   a) Tell them how many syllables the word has and tap/clap these out for them  
   b) Use sentence starters, e.g., “it’s for boiling water, it’s called a ...”  
   c) If the child still cannot remember it, tell them the initial sound of the word and not the letter name, e.g. ‘k’ not ‘kay’, ‘sss’ not ‘ess’.   
   d) As a final strategy, give them forced alternatives, e.g., “Is it a kettle or cooker?”
3. If you do not know what the word is, try to ensure that they do not feel that they have failed and explain that we all forget words at times. Suggest that they tell you the word later if it comes to them or ask them to show you if they can.

Discuss these strategies with the child. Encourage them to decide which are most useful. Aim to encourage the child to use the strategies themselves to allow them to cue themselves rather than depending on an adult to give prompts.

**To help a child retain and recall new words:**

Select 6-10 key words that are being taught within curriculum topics.

* As opportunities arise, ask the child to name the items.
* Depending on whether or not they are successful, discuss the semantic aspects of the item, e.g., “What does it do?”, “Where would you find it?” etc. At this point use a vocabulary word map visual if helpful (this is available on our website).
* Then discuss the phonological aspects of the item, e.g., “Is it a long word or a short word?”, “What sound does it start with?”, “Let’s clap how many syllables are in the word”, “Can you think of any words (real or nonsense) that rhyme with the word?” etc.

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| **Function:** | **What do you do with it?** |
| **Category:** | **What group does it belong to, e.g., food, animal, furniture?** |
| **Place:** | **Where would you find it?** |
| **Material:** | **What is it made from, e.g., wood, plastic, glass?** |
| **Feel:** | **How does it feel, e.g., soft, hard, smooth, rough, fluffy?** |
| **Size:** | **How big is it? (Related to another object)** |
| **Colour:** | **What colour is it?** |
| **Shape:** | **What shape is it?** |
| **Attributes:** | **Does it have wheels / wings / teeth etc?** |
| **Similarity:** | **What else is like it?** |
| **Association:** | **What else does it make you think of?** |
| **Length of word:** | **Is it a long or short word?** |
| **Initial sound:** | **What sound does it start with?** |
| **Other sounds:** | **What other sounds can you hear in the word?** |
| **Rhyming:** | **What words does it rhyme with?** |
| **Syllables:** | **How many syllables does it have?** |