

Concepts

Learning concepts can be difficult because every time we use concept words we are talking about different objects or events.

Which concepts should I teach?

Table (A) gives a guide to the general order that concepts can develop in. The table starts with easier concepts and then moves onto more difficult ones so you can work through the table.

- You can choose concepts that you have noticed the child is struggling with e.g. they picked up a **different** brick when you asked them to get one the **same**.

Or

- You may want to teach other concepts not included in the table that are related to a current classroom topic i.e. **sink/float** in science.

Or

- Your Speech and Language Therapist can discuss with you what concepts are age-appropriate for the child you are working with.

Table (A) – General guide to the order concepts can develop

1	Big/little	16	Large/small	31	Finish/start
2	Hot/cold	17	First/last	32	All/none
3	Wet/dry	18	Heavy/light	33	Together/apart
4	In/on/under	19	Rough/smooth/sharp	34	Whole/half
5	Happy/sad	20	Open/close	35	End/middle
6	Dirty/clean	21	Top/bottom	36	More/less
7	Soft/hard	22	Down/up	37	Wide/narrow
8	Full/empty	23	Near/far	38	Many/few
9	Fast/slow	24	Light/dark	39	Towards/away from
10	Quiet/noisy	25	Wrong/right	40	Corner/centre
11	Long/short	26	Before/after	41	In order
12	Behind/in front/next to	27	Above/below	42	Pair
13	Same/different	28	Difficult/easy	43	As many as
14	Tall/short	29	Old/new	44	Equal
15	Outside/inside	30	Early/late	45	If

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How do I teach concepts?

Below are activities to teach different concepts. We tend to teach concepts in opposites e.g. hot/cold; same/different, before/after. Choose one concept to teach at a time. When the child understands the concept introduce another one. Make activities as 'hands on' for the child as possible so they can experience the concept. The child will also need to practise understanding their new concept in everyday situations.

Activities have been split into:

- Size, comparison, texture and material concepts.
- Time and sequence concepts.
- Direction and position concepts.
- Quantity concepts.

Size, Comparison, Texture and Material Concepts

Some examples of these concepts:

Big/little	Happy/sad	Rough/smooth/sharp
Dirty/clean	Hot/cold	Open/close
Soft/hard	Wet/dry	Long/short
Full/empty	Same/different	Heavy/light
Fast/slow	Tall/short	Large/small
Quiet/loud	Light/dark	Wide/narrow

Activities

- Feely Bag - Collect real objects that show the concept you are trying to teach.
Put the objects in a bag, take turns to take an object out of the bag and talk about it.
- Sorting - Sort the objects into the 2 groups, e.g. long/short.
- Can You Find? - Go round the room looking for items that fit the concept.
- Acting out - 'Act out' the concept if you can e.g. go in the playground and walk *fast* or *slow*, make your hands *dirty* by putting them in mud then wash them so they are *clean*, get some instruments and play them *loudly* or *quietly*. The aim of these activities is to give the child direct experience of the concept so be creative!
- Craft Activities - Draw, paint or make out of play dough, objects that fit the concept description e.g. tall and short people, big and little animals.

Time and Sequence Concepts

Some examples of time concepts:

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First/last	Days	Before/after
Early/late	Months	Arrive/leave
Finish/start	Seasons	Now/later

Activities

- Days – Practise chanting the days of the week. Talk about what day it is today and talk about yesterday/tomorrow. Draw a picture to represent something you have done today, collect a weeks worth and make them into a chart.
- Times of the Day – Make a chart divided into columns with a symbol in each column to represent the time of day e.g. morning, afternoon, evening, night. Think about things you do at different times of the day and draw them in the right columns.
- Months and Seasons – Practise chanting the months of the year. Talk about the month we are in now, what was last month? What will be next month? Make a chart showing: People's Birthdays, Seasons, Special events (such as Easter, Christmas, Halloween, Bonfire night, Eid, Hanukah).
- Visual Timetable – Setting up a visual timetable means the child has something visual to support their thinking around time concepts when we are using them functionally. Make pictures that represent the child's daily activities (a computer programme like 'board maker' is very good for this). Put Velcro on the pictures. At the start of the day sit with the child and talk through what they are going to do that day, putting the pictures in order on a board as you talk about them. E.g. 'This morning we are going to assembly first, and then we will do literacy, after literacy it will be play time.' This way you are using all the time concepts words related to day-to-day activities.
- Sequencing – Almost any task that involves a sequenced set of activities can be used to teach time concept words. Choose a task where activities need to be done in a certain order e.g. making toast, getting dressed. Do the activity with the child or act it out with toys (e.g. dress dolly, teddy going out). Emphasise the time concept words you want to teach e.g. first, next, then, after. Then repeat the task with the child giving you instructions to follow (see the section on sequencing for more ideas.) Sets of pictures are also available to sequence in the right order.

Quantity Concepts

Some examples of quantity concepts:

All/none	Pair	Whole/half
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More/less	As many as	
Many/few	Equal	

Activities

- Objects** – Give a clear example using objects. Collect some bricks or pencils and use them to demonstrate to the child e.g. 'I have lots of bricks I have **many**, you have 2 bricks you have a **few**.' Repeat the task with lots of different objects so the child understands it is the amount that we are talking about not the specific objects. Use objects the child likes to keep their interest e.g. trains, dinosaurs, or pictures of characters from a favourite television programme.
- Craft Activities** – Draw, paint or make out of play dough objects that fit the concept description e.g. **half** an orange, a **pair** of socks.
- Reading a book** – When the child is reading a book talk about the pictures using the new concept e.g. 'Can you find **all** of the birds?' 'Which room has the **most** people in?' Use the words to talk about what's happening in the classroom e.g. 'John has **more** pencils.'
- Instructions** – Give the child instructions using the new concepts 'Can you bring me **all** the rulers?'

Direction and Position Concepts

Some examples of direction and position concepts:

In/on/under	Near/far	Above/below
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Behind/in front/next to	Down/up	Towards/away from
Top/bottom	Outside/inside	Corner/centre

Activities

- Acting out – Show the new concept by 'acting it out' with the child e.g. sit **on** or **under** the table; walk **towards** or **away from** each other. Talk about what you are doing using lots of repetition of the new words.
- Toys – Collect some toys/objects together. Show and describe the concept e.g. 'teddy is **behind** the chair' 'the pencil is **in** the box.' Give the child an instruction to follow e.g. 'put the mouse **on** the box', 'make teddy walk **up** the stairs'
- Longer instructions – When the child can follow short instructions with the new concept try mixing the concepts together and giving longer instructions e.g. 'put the spoon and the car in the cup' 'put teddy on the chair and dolly under the table.'
- Craft Activities – Draw, paint or make out of play dough objects that fit the concept description e.g. someone **inside** a house, a monkey at the **top** of a tree.
- Reading a book – When the child is reading a book talk about the pictures using the new concept e.g. 'What can you see **behind** the tree?' 'Is the dog **inside** or **outside**?'
Use the words to talk about what's happening in the classroom e.g. 'Harry is **next to** you in the line'
- Instructions – Give the child instructions using the new concepts 'Put your bag on the table.'