







## Pre-teaching Vocabulary Group

### What is *Word Aware*?

This handout provides background information for facilitators. Details about structuring the pre-teaching groups as well as activities are provided in Appendix 13.

*Word Aware* consists of four parts:

	1. Make Words Count	Provision of an environment in which children are surrounded by spoken and written words and are inspired to learn them.
	2. Teaching Vocabulary	Introduction of new words from content-rich subjects as well as the fast-paced teaching of words found in books.
	3. Word Detective	Teaching strategies to enhance children's independent word learning.
	4. Fun with Words	Enjoying, celebrating and reinforcing vocabulary.

Pre-teaching vocabulary supports the second strand of *Word Aware*: teaching vocabulary. Teaching vocabulary uses the 'STAR approach'. STAR stands for:





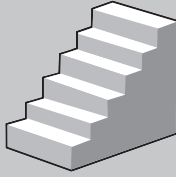
- **Select** the really useful vocabulary from the topic or class text.
- **Teach** the selected vocabulary in a structured manner.
- **Activate** the meaning by using the words in context, linking the word to children's existing knowledge.
- **Review** the taught words to ensure they are retained.

### **Select**

Whole class teaching focuses on teaching 'Goldilocks' words (words that are really useful, see chart overleaf). Pre-teaching vocabulary groups will also work on these 'Goldilocks' words. The group may also include work on some 'anchor' words, if children need them.

When explaining the meaning of any 'Goldilocks' word it is essential that adults only use 'anchor' words, that is, use simple language when introducing a new word.



<b>Anchor words</b> 	<b>Goldilocks words</b> Not too easy and not too hard, but just right 	<b>Step on words</b> 
<p>Children have a thorough understanding of these words.</p> <p>Everyday spoken and written language for a child of this age.</p> <p>Used at home and in daily interactions.</p> <p>Children may have become familiar with this language through school.</p>	<p><b>Really useful words</b></p> <p>Likely to be encountered again in reading or oral language.</p> <p>Average adult has a <b>good</b> level of knowledge of the word.</p> <p>Words that are very topic specific but are core to the topic.</p> <p>Age 7+: Desirable for children to use in their writing.</p>	<p>Less likely to be encountered again in reading or oral language.</p> <p>Average adult does <b>not have much</b> knowledge of the word.</p> <p>Words that are particularly topic specific and are not core to the topic.</p> <p>Age 7+: Not a word that children usually need to use in their own writing.</p>

## Teach

In the teach stage children explore the word by a variety of means so that they start to build up a good understanding of the word. This includes a symbol, sounds, meaning, a sentence containing the word, an action, a song, putting the word up on the Working Word Wall and into a Word Pot.

## Activate

To activate the word it needs to be used in context and linked to what children already know so that they build a stronger understanding of the word.

## Review

There need to be opportunities to review words so that children can remember them. This can be as simple as pulling a word out of the Word Pot and discussing it or by using a more formal game. This element is essential.

In the small group all of these elements are built into the small group plan. There is a clear structure to follow so that every element is covered. This is described on pages 200-09.



## To run a successful word-learning group adults should:

- Use engaging objects and activities that allow for multi-sensory learning.
- Enjoy word learning and transmit this to the children.
- Assist children in transferring their word learning to class.
- Have opportunities for liaison between the class teacher and the group leader. Pre-teaching can only be effective when learning is linked to the classroom.

## Language to use

As children are learning about words, the words that the group leader uses are particularly important. This is a skill that requires some application to learn, and so it will need time and effort. Observing others is a good place to start, but continually reflecting on the language that you use is crucial.

- Be clear about what the new word means and how it relates to the class topic. The class teacher should provide a definition but it is worth a quick discussion to understand which aspects of meaning need to be emphasised. The *Collins Cobuild* dictionary (2006) provides definitions in plain English and so is a good place to start.
- Use the word many times throughout the session.
- Link the new word to other simpler words. Make sure you have looked it up in the dictionary and are aware of simple terms that are connected to the target word.
- Emphasise the speech sounds in the word, so that children are able to build up a clear idea of the sounds in the word.
- When introducing related concepts it is important to introduce one concept at a time and make sure the first is established before introducing another. If the opposite term needs to be used it can be described with a negative, for example, "This is heavy. That one is not heavy" (as opposed to saying 'light').
- Give children time to talk and in particular opportunities to link the word to what they know.
- Model word learning. For example, "That's a word I want to know more about. I am going to listen out for it again."
- Give children specific feedback. For example, "I like the way you really thought about what you know about that word."