

Vocabulary Development and Communication

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Vocabulary, the words we understand and use, is a fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge. Vocabulary development begins early in life, is a marker of intellect as well as language skills and is one of the five building blocks of reading.

The four types of } Receptive Language vocabulary are

- Listening
- Reading } Expressive Language
- Speaking
- Writing

These are what help a child “make sense of the words they see by comparing them to the words they have heard” (Montgomery, 2009).

Receptive and expressive vocabulary can also be organized into three tiers:

- Tier 1, consisting of approximately 8,000 words, are the **most basic** words and are those seen in early reading and sight words. They are **nouns, verbs** and **adjectives**.
- Tier 2 include **high frequency words**, may have multiple meanings and are often the most important ones to teach directly.
- Tier 3 consists of words related to **specific** domains and which have a **low frequency** of use.

The development of vocabulary is not based on a child’s age or grade level, but rather on **experience** (Beck, et al, 2000). Therefore, “you can never select the wrong words to teach” (Montgomery).

When determining what vocabulary to teach, selections should be based on what is:

- fun and motivating for the child,
- functional in his or her environment, and
- what words are appropriate to the child’s development, culture and personality.