



## ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are words which describe the position of an object or person in relation to something else. The first prepositions that children learn are the basic concepts 'in', 'on' and 'under'. More complex prepositions include 'next to', 'behind', 'in front', 'inside', 'outside' 'above' and 'below'.

As with other concept words, prepositions can be difficult for children because they are abstract (you cannot hold 'in front'). Also different prepositions can be used to describe the same object or person. For example, in a line John can be in front of Sarah, but behind Jameel.

Prepositions are important because they allow children to understand and use sentences about the location of objects. Children need to hear the word and associate it with the positional relationship many times before they are able to understand and begin to use it.

### **General Advice**

Things that you can do every day to help include:

- Use lots of **repetition** of prepositions, as the child needs to understand the words before the child can begin to use them.
- When giving an instruction containing a preposition, **place emphasis** on the position word with your voice e.g. 'put your bag under the table'. Keep instructions **short and simple**, and repeat if necessary.
- Provide **visual support** to accompany instructions and comments e.g. use a gesture or actually put the object in the intended position to help the child understand the preposition.
- Use prepositions in **different contexts**. They can be emphasised in everyday activities both in the out and about and at home. For example, during games you could say 'John is climbing over the bench'. They can also be emphasised when they occur in books. **Any shared experience is an opportunity to develop language.**
- When the child uses a sentence containing a preposition, but uses the wrong word provide the child with the **correct model**. E.g. if the child says 'I'm on the chair' when they are actually under the chair, model back 'yes, you are under the chair' modelling the preposition.





### **Games and Activities**

The majority of the following games are aimed at helping the child **understand** prepositions. When they are confident at this, swap roles so that the child is the 'teacher' who has to **use** the correct preposition and give instructions to the adult. This will give the child practice at using prepositions.

- **Barrier games** - Place a barrier between the child and the adult, who both have a set of identical objects e.g. brick, spoon, cup and box. The adult then gives simple instructions as to the placement of objects. For example, 'put the brick in the cup'. After the child has carried out the action, remove the screen to see if they have done the same as the adult.
- **Reading** - When looking at books together, talk about the prepositions as they occur e.g. where is the boy? or 'look, the girl is under the chair'.
- **Drawing, sticking or colouring** - For example, 'draw a ball under the table', 'stick the ball on the chair', 'colour the ball beside the table' etc.
- **Hide and seek** - Either ask the child to hide themselves or some objects. Then talk about where they were found or where they found the objects.
- **Dolls house and furniture** - Ask the child to position people/objects in certain rooms or on, under, beside or next to pieces of furniture.
- **Simon Says** - Use one piece of equipment e.g. a sturdy box or a chair. Ask the child to go 'on the chair', 'under the chair', 'beside the chair' etc. If the child does not understand, position them in the correct place and reinforce this by repeating 'you are under the chair' for example. Repeat the preposition word in many different phrases e.g. what's it like under the chair? or what can you see under the chair? The difficulty of this activity can be increased by having 2+ pieces of equipment where the child has to listen to which piece of equipment they have to go under, on or next to or by asking the child to do something specific in the position e.g. 'sit', 'stand', 'jump'. By doing this, it increases the length and complexity of the instruction.
- **Spot the difference** - Encourage the child to explain the difference between two pictures or two sets of objects for example, the brick is in box vs. the brick is under box.
- **Games** - Cut up the two copies of the 'in', 'on' and 'under' pictures provided and play games such as 'Snap' and 'Pairs'. Every time someone turns over a picture they have to describe where the toy is hiding using the correct preposition e.g. 'the ball is on the car'.

**Children learn most when they are enjoying activities so remember to keep talking time fun!**

If you need further advice or more activities please contact your Speech and Language Pathologist.

