

# Oral Language & Vocabulary

## What is oral language?

Oral, or spoken, language is one way we communicate with one another.

## Increasing dialogue with your student

- Building oral language skills helps expand your child's vocabulary, develop background knowledge, and generate an interest in reading.
- Oral language is used to communicate wants and needs and is also used by students to communicate their understanding of text and the world around them.
- Conversations about common interests and listening to books or music are ways of expanding oral language skills and structures.
- Oral vocabulary knowledge directly impacts reading comprehension because it allows readers to understand and make sense of the individual words in a text.

## What is vocabulary and why is it important?

Vocabulary refers to the words a person understands and uses to communicate, whether speaking, listening, reading, or writing. Vocabulary is acquired over time through continued exposure and practice with words. Our daily activities offer many opportunities to practice learning new words from shopping to reading books together.

"for adolescents (ages 12–14), vocabulary knowledge made the strongest contribution to reading comprehension, both directly, and indirectly via inferencing, as compared to other key variables (word reading, background knowledge, inferencing and strategies)." (Ricketts et al., 2019 p 382)

When students can effectively and efficiently retrieve the meaning of words, it decreases the



mental load to free up resources so that the reader can engage in processes like integration and inferences, which are higher levels of comprehension for more complex texts and topics.

## How can I help my child with their vocabulary/oral language?

- Encourage your child to read materials on topics that genuinely interest them and discuss the content of their reading.
- Broaden your idea of reading materials that are suitable for developing vocabulary. Blogs, magazines, audiobooks, and even song lyrics are all great ways for students to continue building their vocabulary and understanding of oral language structure.
  - Use this to increase family dialogue
- Talk to your child about what they are reading in school and outside of school.
- Ask your child their opinions on what they are reading or events happening around them.
- If possible, get involved at your child's school in any way possible to make connections with teachers and the school community.

Ricketts, J., Lervåg, A., Dawson, N., Taylor, L. A., & Hulme, C. (2019). Reading and oral vocabulary development in early adolescence. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 24(5), 380–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/010888438.2019.1689244>