

SSTaRS

“Shoot for the SSTaRS” to make new words sparkle

Think of words as thousands of stars in the sky. Your goal is to make new words in a story sparkle so that the children attend to and remember them, use them when you are discussing the story and, in time, use them on their own.

Aim high when it comes to boosting children’s vocabulary. “Shoot for the SSTaRS” gives you some practical, easy-to-follow strategies to highlight new words and deepen children’s understanding of them:

S **stress** the new word to focus the children’s attention

S **how** the children what the word means

T **ell** the children what the word means

a **nd**

R **elate** the word to children’s personal experiences and knowledge, as well as to other words and situations

S **ay** it again — and read the book again

S Stress the new word

Beck and McKeown suggest stressing a new word at three stages of reading the book: before, during and after.

Before reading the book — highlight the new word while introducing the book and ask the children if they know what it means. Keep the discussion brief. For example, “Today our book is called ‘The Reluctant Puppy.’

‘Reluctant’ — that’s a new word. Does anyone know what ‘reluctant’ means? (Take feedback.) It means that the puppy doesn’t want to do something. So let’s find out what he doesn’t want to do.”

While reading the book — pause just before and after you say the word and stress the word, using a louder or quieter voice. You can also point to the word on the page or to an illustration that shows the word’s meaning. For example, “And the puppy saw the leash and he pulled back. He was ... *reluctant* ... to go outside where the big dogs were.”

After reading the book — repeat the new word when discussing the book and refer back to the illustrations and props. For example, “So, today we read about a reluctant puppy. Here we see the picture of the puppy pulling away from his owner, who is trying to put the leash on him.”



While reading “Mmm, Cookies” by Robert Munsch, Andrea points to the mother’s face and stresses the word “delighted” when she says, “The little boy gave his mother a giant cookie. His mother was so happy to get such a large cookie. She was really ... *delighted* ... with her present.”

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