

Appendix G5

How to Make a Vocabulary Word Web

(If you would like to keep the “word webs” together, just use a notebook or sketchpad to keep the papers together. Otherwise, feel free to use large pieces of paper you have at home.)

1. Before you read a new book aloud to your child, you can help build his or her vocabulary about a topic or main idea in the book. For example, let’s say your child is about to read a book about two characters in the solar system.
2. On a piece of paper, write the words “In the solar system” in the middle and circle them. Talk with your child about what he/she knows about space or planets or the solar system. Ask questions to generate answers pertaining to the topic, such as “What do you think the two friends will see in space?” or “What might the two friends do in space?” Offer some of your own ideas.
3. As your child shares his/her answers, draw a line coming out of the main topic circle and write down key words or phrases attached to the line. Try to use words that he/she might encounter in the book or new words you will introduce. For example, some words relevant to a book about two friends who are in the solar system might be “moons,” “spacesuit,” “planets,” “craters,” “flying in a space ship,” or “floating.”
4. Try not to let the activity or word web get too overwhelming. Too many words in the web or words that might not become part of your child’s active vocabulary will be unnecessary.
5. Have the word web handy when you read aloud to your child. Check to see if any of your ideas came up in the story or if there is an illustration that shows what you discussed. See if there are words you want to add to the web.
6. From time to time, create a Vocabulary Word Web that helps to generate synonyms (or words that mean the same thing). For example, perhaps in a book your child has already read there was a character who was feeling scared. Write the word “scared” in the middle of a journal page and circle it. Working together, generate new words that mean the same thing as scared and add them to the web. Such words might be “frightened,” “afraid,” “spooked,” or “terrified.”
7. Another kind of Vocabulary Word Web you can add to your child’s journal involves words that are associated with one another. For example, perhaps in a book your child read there was a character who was playing. Write the word “playing” in the middle of a journal page and circle it. Then, together, generate a lot of words that your child (or the character) does while playing. Such words might be “skipping,” “jumping,” “chasing,” “throwing,” “racing,” or “pretending.”