

Appendix C12

How to Make a Word Web

1. Before your child reads a new book, you can help build his or her background knowledge about a topic or main idea in the book. For example, let's say your child is about to read a book about reptiles.
2. On a piece of paper, write the word "reptiles" in the middle and circle it. Talk with your child about what he/she already knows about this topic. Ask questions to generate answers pertaining to the topic, such as, "What characteristics do reptiles have that are different from other animals?" or "Where might you find reptiles?" or "What do you know about how reptiles live?"
3. As your child shares his/her answers, draw a line coming out of the main topic circle and write down a key word (try to avoid phrases) attached to the line. Try to use words that he/she might encounter in the book or use again, even in writing. For example, some words related to the reptile book might be "scales," "desert," "dry," "cold-blooded," and "rough."
4. Try not to let the activity or word web become overwhelming. Too many words in the web or words that might not be part of your child's active vocabulary will be unnecessary.
5. Have the word web handy when your child reads the book independently. Also, have it handy if he/she writes about the book after reading it.
6. From time to time, create a word web with your child about a topic he/she enjoys (like hobbies, science themes, birthdays, or family) or something he/she has learned about at school (such as a unit on penguins or the solar system). Again, focus on adding words that you know your child will encounter again in reading and writing in the future so that he/she is exposed to words in multiple ways. (For example, if creating a word web about "birthdays," your child might add words like "cake," "presents," "party," "hat," and "friends." These are words that will help build your child's word knowledge.)
7. If your child wants, display these word webs where he/she can see them regularly to read, or compile them to make a fun book!