

Building Word Skills and Vocabulary

Practical Fun-to-Do Activities

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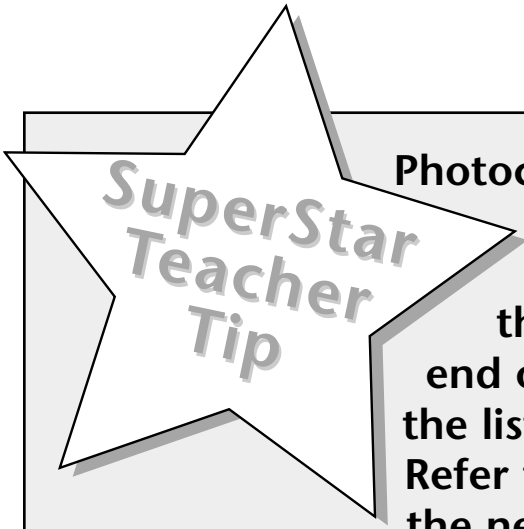
The Importance of Word Skills

Jot a list of the students in your class who are the most successful in school. What do these children have in common? These children are probably your most skilled readers and language users. Children who are the best readers understand how words work and know how and when to apply word skills.

Give every child in your class the opportunity to excel! Increase word skills and vocabulary with a variety of high-interest activities and learning materials. Include activities that engage the whole class, small groups, pairs of students, and individuals. In addition to direct instruction, provide plenty of fun-to-do independent word-skills activities.

Reading aloud to your students is another great way to boost word skills. Reading aloud increases word skills by

- Exposing children to new vocabulary within the context of stories
- Developing students' ability to use context to predict the meaning of words
- Demonstrating the variety of ways in which words can be put together to form sentences



**SuperStar
Teacher
Tip**

Photocopy your district's or state's standard, and highlight the language skills that you must teach at your grade level. Staple these pages inside your plan book. At the end of each week, take a minute to glance at the lists and highlight the skills that you taught. Refer to these pages when you are planning for the next week's lessons.

Build Word Skills the Hands-on Way

Students love using these hands-on materials designed to build letter and word skills.



Individual Sand Trays

Fill cookie sheets or metal stove burner covers with sand to make individual sand trays. Have students practice letters and words by “writing” with their fingers in the sand. Make sure to have students do this activity on a raised surface for easier clean up. A gentle shake or two of the sand trays erases the letters. It’s handy to have a set of five or six sand trays when working with groups of students. Even filled with sand, the trays stack easily for storage. Students love using these hands-on materials designed to build letter and word skills.



**SuperStar
Teacher
Tip**

For a different tactile experience, try salt in the trays instead of sand. It’s easy to form letters more precisely in the salt because of its finer grain. Remind your students not to rub their eyes with their fingers when they’re working in the salt trays.



Individual White Boards

White sheets of tile board purchased at building supply stores can easily be cut into rectangles approximately 10” x 12” to make individual white boards. Make enough white boards for every student in your class. Write on the boards with dry erase markers—old socks make ideal erasers. Individual white boards come in handy when practicing letters, words, shapes, and numbers.

