

# Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



## Goal: concept 'Long & Short'

To develop the ability to understand and then use the concept words 'long' and 'short'.

Long is amongst the first concepts a child typically learns. Short is typically developed later than long however it is best to teach them together to explain and compare the two concepts. By learning these concepts your child will be able to understand instructions better and will be useful for your child as they begin to use more descriptive language.

### Understanding the concepts long/short:

- Understanding a concept comes before a child can say a concept word. Therefore, we need to ensure the child can understand the concept we are teaching before they can use it.
- Begin with a real experience of the concept e.g. point something out in the environment which is long "look at the cats long tail" or "look at the mouse its tail is short" etc.
- Move on to using toy/s objects when your child is ready.
- Once your child has mastered this move onto pictures or photos. Beginning with the adult sorting objects or pictures into either 'long or short' categories, whilst modeling the concept word.
- Next the child sorts objects or pictures, while the adult models the concept word. For example the child might sort pictures of a trains/buses which are either long or short into different boxes while you say " long train, short train" etc.
- Next the child sorts and imitates what you say.
- Then the child sorts and says the concept word by himself. If he/she is not correct, model the correct word and ask them to copy you.
- Finally the child practices the structure in games where they need to follow instructions or barrier games.



Below are some ideas to use in everyday situations (remember frequent practice is the key):

- Talk to your child about long and short as you do the folding or load the washing machine. Compare their clothes with the clothes of adults in the house e.g. “long sock, short sock”
- As your child is eating a meal (particularly with spaghetti), talk about long/short concepts using their food “long spaghetti, short spaghetti”
- Make a collage with your child, sticking on ‘long’ and ‘short’ pictures of things you find in junk mail, magazines or print off of the internet.
- Look at items you find in the environment, such as sticks or cars. By making sure you have a ‘long’ and a ‘short’ item to compare you will avoid confusing your child.
- Put things inside a feely bag and then compare their size as your child takes them out.
- Look for size differences in your child’s toys that you can talk about as they play.

### Using the concepts long/short:

*Once your child is able to understand the concepts long/short the next step is for your child to use the concepts in their language.*

#### Step 1

- **Imitation:** Have your child repeat the phrase containing the target concept after you.  
e.g. Adult “This train is long, what size is the train”
- **Forced choice:** Present the child with two choices and encourage him/her to say the correct answer.  
e.g. Adult “Is this train long or short?”
- **Sentence completion:** Have your child complete a sentence starter which you provide.  
e.g. point to a long train. Adult “this train is...”  
Child “long”
- **Forming sentences:** Ask your child questions which prompt him/her to use the new concept in their response.  
e.g. point to a long train whilst saying “What size is this train”

*At this point your child is able to spontaneously use the concept long/short. Encourage their use of this structure in barrier games with a ‘long’ and ‘short’ concept. Reinforce their use of the concepts ‘long’ and ‘short’ when they are giving you instructions in the game.*

