

Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: Using Verb Tenses

To develop the ability to use present, future and past tense correctly in sentences.

Verbs are action words. They talk about things we are doing, will do and have done. In English we mark whether we are talking about things that happened in the past, are happening now or will happen in the future by using word endings called verb tenses. Young children can often use them incorrectly or leave them out of sentences altogether.

Verbs are action words. They are things we can do such as run, eat, and sleep. They also include thinking verbs such as think, know, remember, decide, suppose and words such as is, be and do.

- If we are doing something now we use the present tense eg: painting, laughing, walking.
- If we have done the action we use the past tense eg: painted, laughed, walked.
- If we are going to do it in the future we use the future tense eg. will eat, am going to sleep.

Most words in English follow the 'ed' rule for past tense, that is when we say a doing word that has happened in the past we add 'ed' to the end. Some words do not follow this rule eg:

swimming → swam

eating → ate

Children often confuse these words initially eg: saying 'eated' for 'ate'.

Modelling is the best place to start to teach children to understand these rules. Say verbs in sentences as they happen in your everyday actions.

eg: Look Mum's washing the dishes.
I'm hanging the clothes.
You are jumping.
We are eating.
Look the dog's running.
We are clapping.

Encourage your child to say what you say ie: Let's say together "We are clapping".



Once your child is using the present form of doing words, introduce the past tense. You can do this by talking about things when they have happened. Make sure you use words that end with the '-ed' ending to start with. These words are easier and follow a set rule.

eg: If he/she brings home a painting from kindy you say.
 "Wow, tell me what you ainted?"
 "Who else ainted at kindy?"

If your child makes an error in his/her speech you should model back the correct way to say the sentence.

eg: Your child "I paint at kindy today".
 You: "Yes you **ainted** at kindy".
 ↑
 give this word extra emphasis in the sentence.



Activities to practice verb tenses:

1. Watching other people and talking about what they are doing, at home, when you are out, at school or preschool, and on TV.
2. Acting out actions with dolls, puppets, figures or small animals. This can be used to show the change in verb tenses over time eg: "The horse will jump, he is jumping, he jumped".
3. Using action pictures and sequence cards.
4. Looking at actions in picture books.
5. Talking as your child moves about on the playground. "you will slide, you are sliding, you slid".
6. Looking at photos and talking about what you have done in past tense.
7. Talking about you plans for the day. "first we will..., then we will..."

