

# **Building Language Skills to Create a Positive Early Learning Environment**

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# Research Partnerships



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**YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER**  
**+ SCHOLASTIC COLLABORATIVE**  
for Child & Family Resilience

**Consultants: Dr. Walter Gilliam, Dr. Sherri Killins and Dr. Azadeh Jamalian**



# What We'll Cover Today

1

Importance of Language

2

Social Emotional Implications

3

Strategies to Scaffold Language

4

Importance of Vocabulary

5

Fostering Conversations During Read Alouds



# Importance of Language

In the chat please share why Oral Language is important in Early Childhood?



# Oral Language is the Foundation for Literacy Development

Oral language provides children with a sense of words and sentences and builds sensitivity to the sound system so that children can acquire phonological awareness and phonics. Through their own speech children demonstrate their understanding of the meanings of words and written materials.



# Language Gap into Achievement Gap

The chief culprit behind the reading achievement gap is the language gap

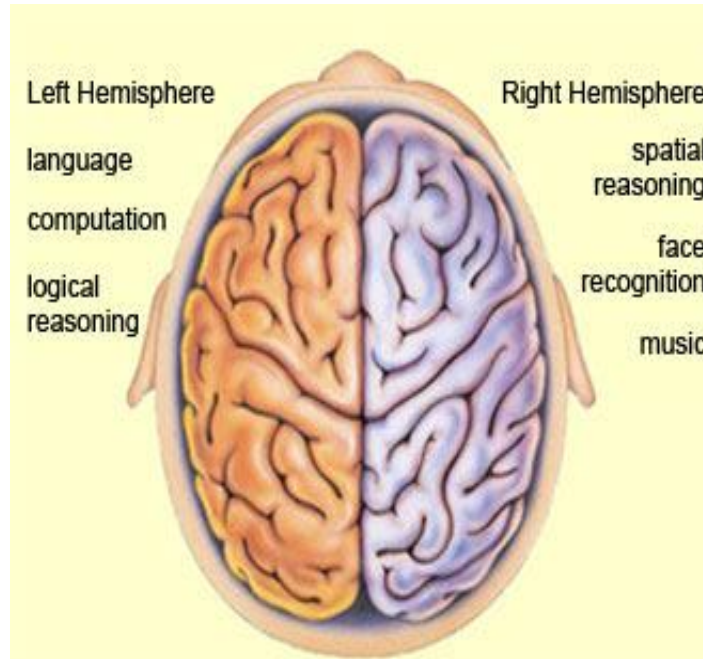
- Linguistically advantaged children enter 1<sup>st</sup> grade with **20,000** words.
- Linguistically disadvantaged children know **5,000** words.

Moats labels the gap ***word poverty***

Moats, 2001

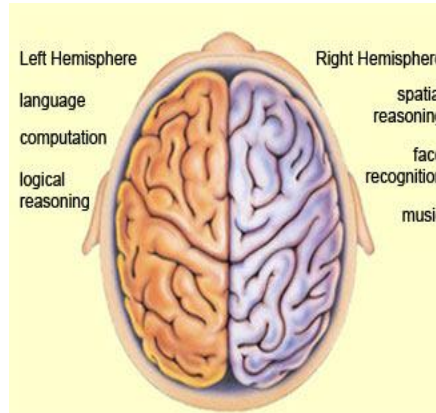


# Brain Hemispheres





# Brain Hemispheres



- Language Begins at Birth
- The brain of a three-year-old is two and a half times more active than that of an adult
- Experiences wire the brain





# Oral Language Components

Oral language, the complex system that relates sounds to meanings, is made up of three components: the phonological, semantic, and syntactic (Lindfors, 1987).

The **phonological component** involves the rules for combining sounds. Speakers of English, for example, know that an English word can end, but not begin, with an -ng sound. We are not aware of our knowledge of these rules, but our ability to understand and pronounce English words demonstrates that we do know a vast number of rules.

The **semantic component** is made up of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning that may be combined with each other to make up words (for example, paper + s are the two morphemes that make up papers), and sentences (Brown, 1973). A dictionary contains the semantic component of a language, but also what words (and meanings) are important to the speakers of the language.

The **syntactic component** consists of the rules that enable us to combine morphemes into sentences. As soon as a child uses two morphemes together, as in "more cracker," she is using a syntactic rule about how morphemes are combined to convey meaning.

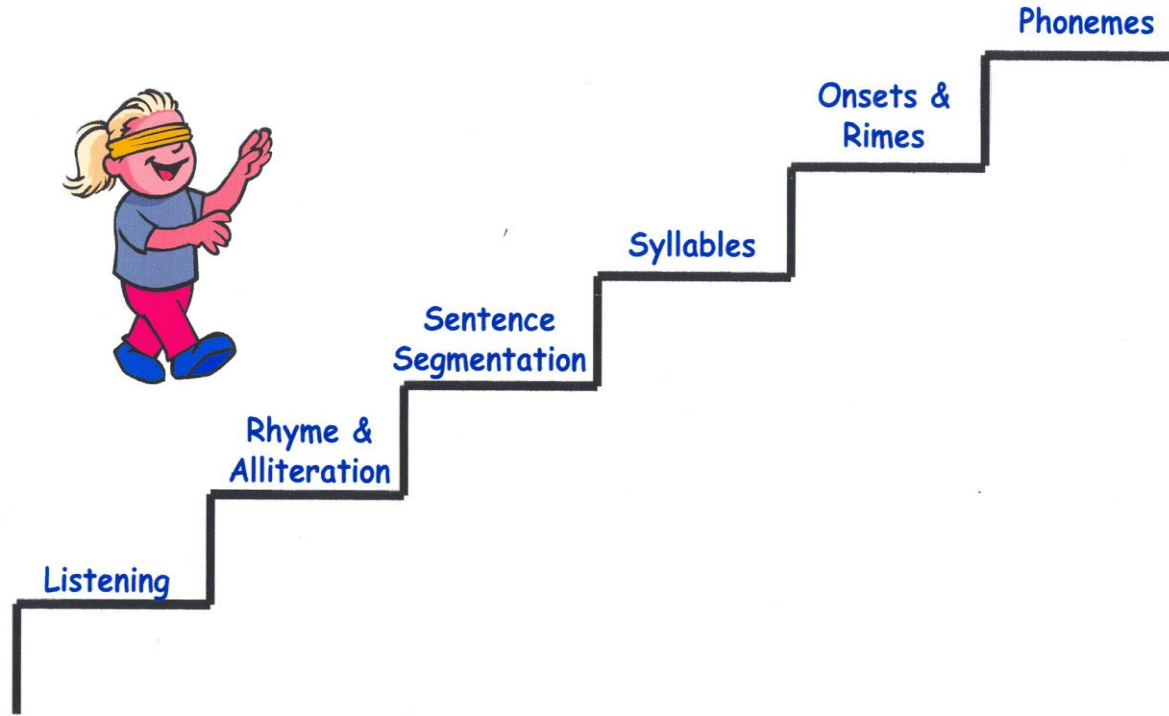


# Importance of Phonological Awareness

- It is estimated that more than **90%** of students with significant reading problems have a core deficit in their ability to process phonological information. Blachman, 2000
- These deficits can be overcome through quality instruction, which significantly accelerates students' subsequent reading and writing achievement.
- Therefore, once students demonstrate phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge, they are ready to map speech to print.



# Phonological Awareness Continuum



# Social Emotional Implications



# Social & Emotional Learning



## Emotional Development

- Show Self-Awareness
- Move Carefully Through Surroundings
- Show Pride
- Understand Your Abilities
- Talk About Your Feelings
- Understand Feelings and Actions
- Manage Your Feelings
- Talk About Your Needs
- Manage Change
- Reframe the Narrative
- Tolerate Frustration



## Social Development

- Engage With Adults and Peers
- Make and Keep Relationships
- Play With Others
- Show Empathy
- Try to Help Others
- Work Together Toward a Goal
- Try to Resolve Conflicts
- Follow Rules and Routines
- Take Responsibility for Materials and Jobs

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for Child & Family Resilience



## Motivation and Creativity

- Show Curiosity
- Take Initiative
- Ask and Answer Questions
- Use Imagination
- Try a New Way
- Talk and Share
- Make Connections
- Think Symbolically
- Use Tools



## Executive Function

- Focus Attention
- Think Before You Act
- Persist in Tasks
- Develop Working Memory
- Make Plans
- Classify and Organize
- Identify and Solve Problems
- Take Another Point of View
- Show Flexible Thinking



# Strategies to Scaffold Language



# Partnership: Children's Learning Institute



“**Scaffolded conversations** are important for children’s language development. Teachers can plan open-ended questions and ‘**strive for five**’ conversational turns during high-quality read-alouds.”

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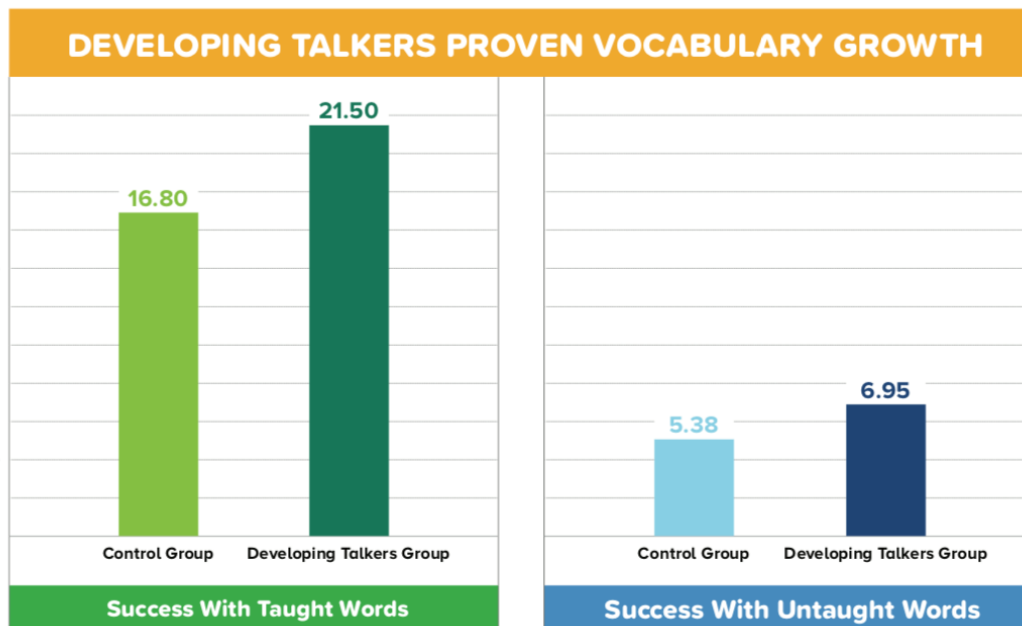
—**Tricia Zucker, Ph.D.**

Children’s Learning Institute at UT Health Science Center at Houston





# Gold-Standard Research



# Scaffolding Language

In the chat indicate a strategy you might use to scaffold or promote language?

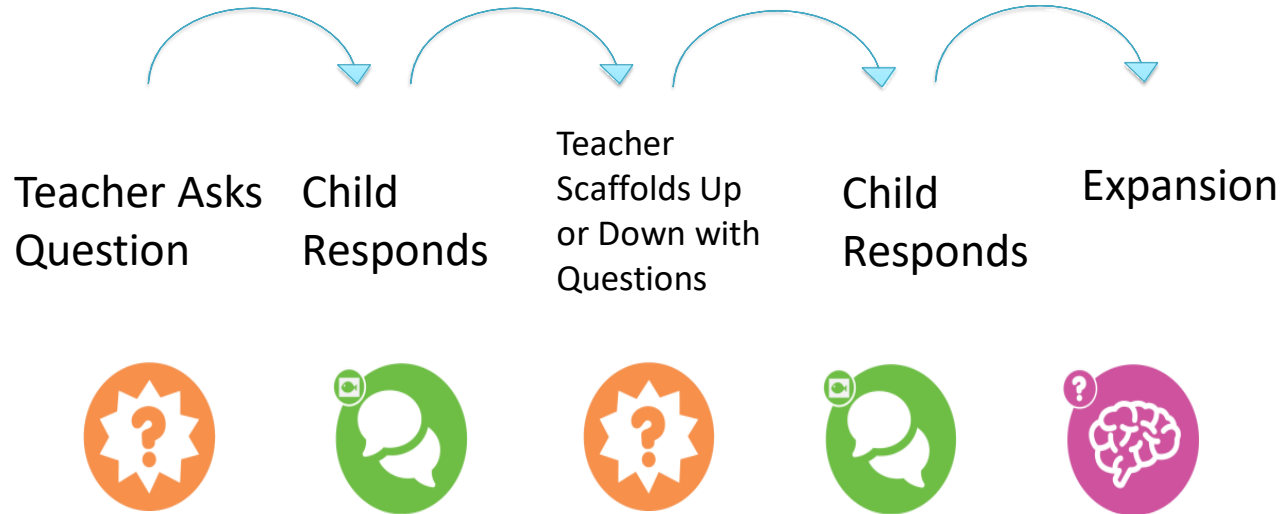


# Multiple Turn Conversations

- When two or more people talk with each other to share ideas and information.
- Helps you build connections with children and learn about their interests.
- Encourages children's cognitive development, social skills, and emotional maturity.



# Strive for Five



# Importance of Vocabulary



# Vocabulary

- Vocabulary signifies more than a list of words-it is a proxy for content knowledge.
- Learning new words often involves learning new ideas and information; memorizing definitions is not the same thing.



-Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986



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# TIERS of Vocabulary Instruction

- **Tier One: Basic, everyday words**
- **Tier Two: More abstract words, but with high frequency and familiar concepts**
- **Tier Three: Least common words related to specific content area**

**Preschool children can learn technical words!**





# Which do I teach?

- **Basic words**
- **Domain General-Sophisticated Words**
- **Domain Specific-Technical Words**



# Introduction of Vocabulary

- Introduce the word and have child repeat
- Child friendly definition
- Explain the word
- Connect the word
- Some vocabulary is taught Indirectly and Directly
- Best when connected to context or book if possible

PICTORIAL SUPPORT



Key words and phrases are introduced and retaught throughout the program following the proven Developing Talkers model.



doctor

Indirectly vs Directly

Language

Our Community | 2.3.4

VOCABULARY

INTRODUCE

**doctor**

**Repeat**

Say this word after me: doctor.

**Define**

A doctor is a person who helps sick people get well.

**Describe**

The girl in the picture was feeling sick. The doctor is making sure she will feel better soon.

**Act It Out**

Let's pretend you are the doctor in the picture. What is the doctor doing? Can you do that to a partner? Take turns.

RETEACH

**doctor**

**Repeat**

Say this word after me: doctor.

**Define**

A doctor is a person who helps sick people get well.

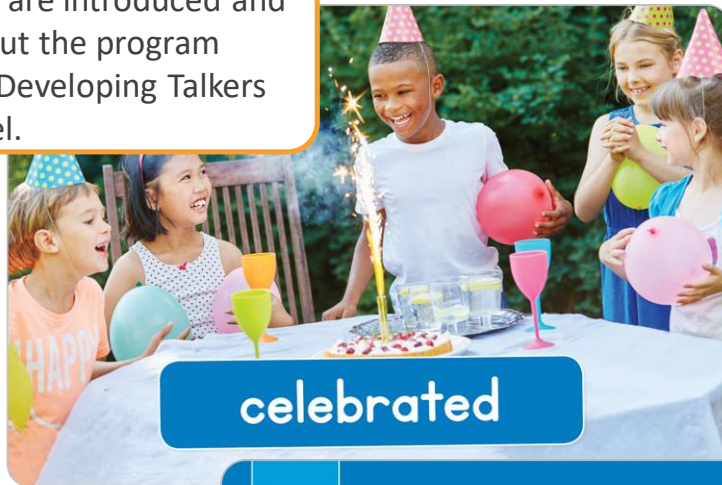
**Discuss**

Look at the picture. What tools does the doctor have to help the girl? How does she use the tools?

Repeat, rephrase, or expand.

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celebrated

Language

Our Community | 2.3.5

VOCABULARY

INTRODUCE

**celebrated**

**Repeat**

Say this word after me: celebrated.

**Define**

When you celebrate, you do a fun activity because something special happened.

**Describe**

These children are celebrating a birthday.

**Act It Out**

Let's pretend that we're celebrating together. What can we do to celebrate? Let's act out celebrating by cheering.

RETEACH

**celebrated**

**Repeat**

Say this word after me: celebrated.

**Define**

When you celebrate, you do a fun activity because something special happened.

**Discuss**

What are the children in the picture doing? What kinds of things do you like to do to celebrate a special day?

Repeat, rephrase, or expand.

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# Fostering Meaningful Conversations During Interactive Read Alouds



# Selection of Books-High Quality Authentic Texts

To support language, select books with coherent narrative structure (fiction) or clear presentation of facts (non-fiction).





- Children's **books contain 50% more vocabulary** than spoken language, when compared to college graduates' discourse
- When children are read to routinely in the first 5 years of life, are exposed to **1.4 million more words** than children without routine shared reading





Read  
Alouds

Classroom  
Library

Alphabet  
Books

Big Books



# Wh Questions

Who

What

When

Where

These types of questions are  
non-negotiable...  
but they won't suffice.



# Questioning Types/Strategies

C completion

R recall

O open-ended

W h

D distancing



# Dialogic Reading

In dialogic reading the **child** learns to become the **storyteller**. The **adult** assumes the role of an **active listener** while increasing the sophistication of the child's oral language development.

- asking questions
- adding information
- prompting the child

[Dialogic Reading: A Shared Picture Book Reading Intervention for Preschoolers](#) by Andrea A. Zevenbergen and Grover J. Whitehurst



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# PEER Sequence

**P**rompt

**E**valuate

**E**xpand

**R**epeat



# Supporting Language with Scholastic



# LANGUAGE

PreK On My Way builds on the proven success of **Developing Talkers** to ensure that every child has the skills and vocabulary needed for confidence and success in elementary school!



**Prek**  
ON MY WAY™

Your language guide,  
**Scout the Squirrel**

The image shows an open language guide for 'PreK On My Way' featuring 'Scout the Squirrel'. The left page is titled 'DAY 1 WEEK 3: Helpers' and 'LARGE GROUP Circle Time and Story Time'. It includes a 'THANK YOU, OMU!' book, 'LEARNING GOALS' (Language: Listening, Vocabulary, Conversation; Social Studies: Economics; Fine Arts: Art), and 'In this lesson, you will:' instructions. The right page is titled 'SMALL GROUP We Share' and 'INDEPENDENT CENTERS Conversation Prompts for Purposeful Play'. It features 'LEARNING GOALS' (Language: Vocabulary, Conversation, Sentence Structure; Mind Builders: Executive Function) and 'ACTIVITY CARDS' (3s SUPPORT, 4s TYPICALLY DEVELOPING, 5s CHALLENGE). The independent centers include 'LIBRARY AND LITERACY CENTER', 'MATH AND SCIENCE CENTER', and 'CREATIVITY STATION'. A 'SKILLS FOCUS' section at the bottom left details 'Social Studies' and 'Fine Arts' objectives.

- High-value vocabulary
- Visual and kinesthetic support
- Open-ended prompts
- Scaffolded conversation
- Proven activities

# LITERACY

In partnership with the Yale Child Study Center, Scholastic developed **Discover Together**, a model early childhood approach for building literacy, social and emotional skills, and resilience.



Your literacy guide,  
**Pablo the Parrot**



- Mind Builder Cross-Cutting Skills
- Power of Story
- Phonological Awareness
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Read Aloud Comprehension
- Emergent Writing



# MATH

With the guidance of Dr. Jie-Qi Chen, founder of the Early Math Collaborative at the Erikson Institute, Scholastic celebrates mathematical thinking as a natural part of young children's play and everyday experiences.



Your math guide,  
Lala the Lizard



- Mathematize Through Story and Play
- Multiple Representations
- Concrete to Abstract
- Decomposing and Composing
- Shapes and Patterns
- Measurement
- Sorting and Organizing
- Math Language



# STORY TIME

15 min

## Introduce the Big Book

Show the big book cover.

*This week we are going to read Thank You, Omu! by Oge Mora.*

Use the Scout Stick Puppet.

*Scout really likes stories with beautiful pictures. Pictures are also called illustrations.*

## Share the Guiding Question

*There is a question I want you to think about as we read. We will talk about it after we read. Ready?*

*Why did so many people knock on Omu's door?*

## Read-Aloud: Read for Enjoyment

Read aloud the book and the Day 1 prompts.

Use Equity Sticks to choose children to answer questions.

### Cover

*The writer and illustrator Oge Mora made illustrations for this book by cutting up pieces of paper. She glued them on another paper and added paint. What shapes can you see in the cut-out pieces of paper?*

pages 2–3

*Look at the picture of Omu cooking a pot of stew. Have you ever eaten stew before?*

Revisit stew Vocabulary Card.

pages 4–5

*Can you predict, or guess, what is coming out of the pot and blowing out of the window? \**

pages 6–7

*The little boy knocked on Omu's door because of a "delicious smell."*

Revisit delicious Vocabulary Card.

*Is that a good smell? Can you think of other foods that smell delicious?*

pages 30–31

*What do you think will happen next in the story? \**

## Talk About It

*Let's turn and talk about the guiding question:*

*Why did so many people knock on Omu's door?*

Give a moment for Turn and Talk.

Then, pick 2–3 children with Equity Sticks to share their thinking.

Possible responses:

- They smelled something delicious.
- They wanted to eat some stew.
- They were hungry.

## Support

1 *Did they smell something delicious or something bad?*

2 *They smelled something d\_\_\_\_\_ (delicious).*

3 *They smelled something delicious.*

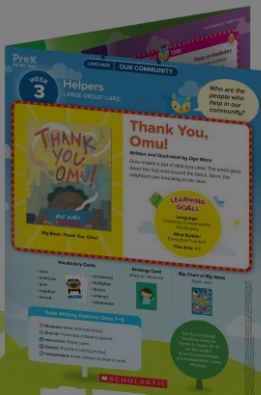
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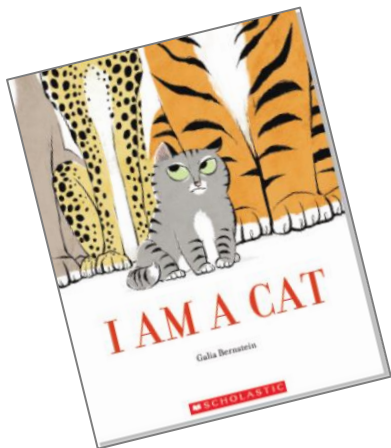
## Challenge

*Which people showed up at Omu's door?*

## Modeled Writing

Write and read aloud short sentences about Omu's stew as children watch and listen.





Five open-ended supports for interactive read aloud.

DAY 1

DISCOVER ANIMALS | WEEK 4: Animal Features

**CIRCLE TIME**

**Build Science Background**  
Talk with children about animals they know. Choose two animals and work with children to compare their differences and similarities.

**Sing About Animals**  
Invite children to sing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," filling in the names of animals they know and showing how the animals move and sound.

**Focus on Vocabulary**  
Introduce two new words.  
Use 4.41 Vocabulary Cards.  
feature family

**STORY TIME**

**Introduce the Big Book**  
Show the big book cover.  
This week we are going to read I Am a Cat by Galia Bernstein.  
Use the Scout Stick Puppet.  
Scout loves all sorts of books, but he especially loves narratives like this one. They tell such interesting stories!

**Share the Guiding Question**  
There is a question I want you to think about as we read. We will talk about it after we read. Ready? What are some features that cats have?

**Read-Aloud: Read for Enjoyment**  
Read aloud the book and the Day 1 prompts.  
Use Equity Sticks to choose children to answer questions.

pages 8–9  
What is one feature that Lion and Simon share?

Revisit feature Vocabulary Card.

pages 14–15  
What features does Tiger talk about to describe cats?

pages 16–17  
What features does Lion say all cats have?

pages 24–25  
Simon says he has all those features. How is he different from the big cats?

pages 28–29  
Simon has the same features as the other cats. Is he part of the cat family? Why or why not?

Revisit family Vocabulary Card.  
Show me a thumbs-up if you think Simon is part of the cat family or a thumbs-down if you think he is not.  
Ask 1–2 children why they put their thumbs up or down.

**Talk About It**  
Let's turn and talk about the guiding question:  
What are some features that cats have?  
Give a moment for Turn and Talk.  
Then pick 2–3 children with Equity Sticks to share.

Possible responses:  
• Cats have long tails.  
• Cats have sharp claws.  
• Cats have perky ears.

**Support**

- Do cats have long tails or long ears?
- Cats have long \_\_\_\_\_ (tails).
- Cats have long tails.

**OR**

**Challenge**  
Which feature do you think is most useful for cats? Why?

**Modeled Writing**  
Write and read aloud short sentences about animal features as children watch and listen. Then show children how they combine two of the sentences without changing their meaning.

**Child Development: Vocabulary**  
Learning new vocabulary words is key to a preschool child's academic preparation for kindergarten. Children's vocabulary grows significantly when vocabulary instruction is introduced in read aloud books. Promote children's vocabulary development by identifying suitable vocabulary for explicit instruction during story time.

Revisit vocabulary as appropriate during interactive read aloud

DAILY Writing

# SCHOLASTIC EDUCATION

1. Scholastic Early Learning Libraries
2. Scholastic F.I.R.S.T.
3. Social-Emotional Learning Library
4. Culturally Responsive Collections
5. School Readiness Kits
6. Family Engagement Resources
7. Professional Learning Services
8. Prek On My Way
9. Scholastic Magazines



## Prek ON MY WAY™





**THANK YOU!**

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