

Cues To Help With Word-Finding

Some children have difficulty finding the right word when they need it. As adults, there are a few “cues” or hints you can give to help them out. The following list starts with the easiest cues and ends with the hardest:

1. **imitation:** Say the word for your child and have them repeat it.
Adult: “Duck.”
Child: “Duck.”
2. **forced choice question:** Give your child a choice between two words.
Adult: “Is it a duck or a dog?”
Child: “Duck.”
3. **“yes” question followed by sentence completion:** Ask your child the question using the desired response and then have them complete your sentence using the word.
Adult: “Is it a duck?”
Child: “Yes.”
Adult: “You’re right! It’s a ...” (pause)
Child: “Duck.”
4. **phonemic cue:** Give your child the first sound of the word.
Adult: “duh”
Child: “Duck.”
5. **negation:** Tell your child what it is *not*. If there is one word the child tends to use instead of the desired response, say that word.
Adult: “It’s not a bird...”
Child: “Duck.”
6. **false assertion:** Label the item as something else so that your child will correct you.
Adult: “It’s a frog!”
Child: “No, duck.”
7. **visual cue:** Use a gesture (without words) to give the child a hint about the word.
Adult: *use hand as quacking beak*
Child: “Duck.”
8. **semantic cue:** Tell the child something about the word (e.g., what it looks/sounds like, what it does, etc.).
Adult: “It says quack” *or* “It lives at the pond” *or* “It swims on the water”
Child: “Duck.”
9. **series of questions followed by sentence completion:** This is typically used if you don’t know what word your child is trying to use. Ask a series of “yes”, “no” and “wh-” questions to help draw out the answer. Then use sentence completion from #3.