

Language & Learning

Building Concepts

What does it look like, feel, and taste like?

Some objects are around babies all the time. They don't get interesting until one becomes somehow different from all the others. Your baby sees stacks of diapers by the changing table every day. A STINKY diaper, or a WET diaper becomes more interesting than one of those in the stack. Of course, when you get a DRY, CLEAN diaper and put it on, then your baby likes to know the name for that comfortable feeling.

You can use words for how things look, feel, smell and taste over and over again. Concept words pop up throughout the day. Any interaction with your baby gives you a chance to point these ideas out. Let's take a look at some daily routines that are ripe for talking about concept words. During our busy lives, it can be easy to hurry through some of these ordinary routines. Remember that by slowing down just a little, you can provide learning opportunities for your little one.

Waking up time: "Good morning, sweetie. Are you WET? (baby lifts arms) UP we go...let's take a bath. OOH that water feels WARM. (baby grins and splashes) You LOVE your bath. (parent wipes baby...) A WET face. WET feet. WET arms. (baby shivers) You are getting COLD now. Let's get a WARM towel. DRY you off. "

Breakfast in the high chair: "Mmmmm cereal! Take a bite! (baby eats) Cereal tastes WARM and YUMMY. (baby reaches toward spoon) Oh, you want MORE? MORE cereal. (baby puts hand in hair) Uh oh, some cereal in your hair. That's STICKY."

Playtime: (your toddler is exploring Tupperware from kitchen cabinets while parents are getting dinner ready). "What did you find?" That bowl is BIG. PULL the lid OFF (toddler struggles to get it off and fusses.) Oh that's HARD. I will help. (toddler smiles and looks up as lid comes off). You got the lid OFF. What a BIG lid! (toddler tries it on her head). Oh, FUNNY...you made a BIG HAT!. (toddler works to get the lid back on) Put it ON. PUSH."

Naptime: (baby yawns). "Are you SLEEPY?" It's nap time. You want your BIG blanket? (baby takes it and feels it) It is so SOFT. You love your BIG blanket. Nightie night."

When you are making your list of words that interest your baby, be sure to include some concept words. Remember to use words for:

- **Size:** Big/little, tall/short
- **Appearance:** cute, pretty, broken
- **Texture:** cold/hot, wet/dry, hard/soft, heavy/light
- **Taste:** sour, sweet
- **Smell:** stinky, m-m-m-good
- **Direction:** up/down, in/out

Remember some of the ideas from the other sections of this website. Don't take all the turns. First pay attention to what interests your baby. Talk about what your baby notices and explores. Follow baby's lead.