

SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY

Activities to teach irregular past tense

As certain past tense verbs do not follow the normal rules of putting “ed” on the end, activities involving use of irregular past tense may have to be repeated many times for the child to learn these verbs.

1. Role-play activities for working on “ate”, “drank”, and “bought” are fun.
 - a. Set up a restaurant scene – your child could be a customer choosing various items from the menu with you being the waiter/waitress. When your child has finished the pretend meal he/she can be asked:

“What did you eat?” (to elicit “I ate...”)
“What did you drink?” (to elicit “I drank...”)
 - b. Shopping – your child has to buy various food items from a pretend shop, (empty food packets could be used). Afterwards ask your child what he/she has bought:

“What did you buy?” (to elicit “I bought...”)
2. You and your child can instruct each other to draw a picture. For example, you say “Draw a house!” then you say “What did you draw?” aiming to elicit “I drew...”
3. Robber game. This is a role-play activity which can be played in a small group with the children taking it in turns to be a robber and a policeman. The robber takes some objects from a “shop” (e.g. watch, toys etc) while the policeman isn’t looking. The policeman tries to catch the robber. At the end, the robber is asked to reveal what he took, e.g. “I took a watch”.
4. What’s gone? Four or five objects are placed on the table. This can be played either in a small group or with you and your child on your own. Ask your child to look at the objects for a few minutes. Then, when your child’s eyes are closed, something is taken from the table. Your child has to guess what’s gone, saying “You took...” or “the ... has gone”.

Other activities (using regular and irregular past tense)

1. Tell stories. Puppets can be used. Act out a sequence using the puppets and encourage your child to re-tell the story using the past tense.
2. Look at a story with your child and encourage him/her to re-tell the story, perhaps after just a few pages.

3. Collect a few noise-making instruments behind a screen, e.g. a drum, trumpet, a bell (home-made instruments can be made from dried peas etc in yoghurt cartons). One child disappears behind the screen and plays an instrument. The other members of the group have to guess what he/she did:

e.g. He rang the bell
She banged the drum, etc.

4. Place a few objects in front of your child, e.g. a purse, a pencil, a box, paper, scissors. While your child watches, perform an activity, e.g. put the pencil in the box. Your child must tell you what you did, "You put the pencil in the box"

Open the purse: "You opened the purse!"
Close the box: "You closed the box!"

Asking about real events that have happened should encourage your child to use the past tense.

You can also find resource packs to buy on the Black Sheep Press website

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