Adjectives



Ideas for

Intervention

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First, think about the role that adjectives play within the greater grammatical context. Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns by answering questions like: Which one? What kind? How many? Whose?

Now, go broad: how do these description words play a critical role in pragmatic development? Not only do children have to learn what the words mean, but they must figure out how to use adjectives in the appropriate social context (Ricks & Alt, 2015).

It is also important for providers (e.g., teachers and clinicians) to consider the impact that the client’s appropriate use of adjectives will have on their educational and linguistic success. According to National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers (2019), by first grade students should be able to use frequently occurring adjectives ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.1. F](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/1/1/f/)). By grade three, children should be able to explain the functions of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Moreover, students must also be able to define the way adjectives function in specific sentences ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.1.A](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a/)) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019).

Methods



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Consider the expected developmental time frame: according to Dr. Robert Owens, adjectives develop in children's verbal language in the following order:

* Size, color, shape, length, temperature, height, width, age, taste, odor, attractiveness, time, speed, texture, affect, and distance (Owens, 2010).

According to Ricks and Alt (2015), children first begin to use adjectives at about 2 years 4 months of age. This information tells us that adjectives can start to be taught and understood, preceding this point in a child’s language development (Ricks & Alt, 2015).

If the client has mastered the concept of nouns, then educators should introduce adjectives by relating them to nouns. Relating adjectives to a concept that the student already understands:

* makes the purpose of adjectives clearer by providing direct context.
* adjectives become more easily identifiable (Jaiswal, 2005).

Mintz and Gleitman (2002), underscored the importance of two key factors in young children to understand important features that distinguish adjectives from other word types:

* First, the child must understand that attributes of objects and can change across the same noun category.
* Second, the child learns that you add the adjective to the noun name (e.g., “big dog” versus “big one”).

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When teaching this grammatical subject, it’s of best practice to use concepts that are easily illustrated. This suggestion is exemplified through the incorporation of targets within compare and contrast activities.

* According to Mitchell, Evans, and Bernard (1977), this method worked the best for students with cognitive impairments and learning disabilities.

The source stated that when teaching new linguistic and grammatical concepts, the clinician should utilize familiar stimuli (Mitchell et al., 1977). According to Owens (2010), a good rule of thumb is to teach new content within previously learned form.

* Evidence based practice informs us that these concepts are best understood when children are given meaningful opportunities to apply what they know (Ricks & Alt, 2016).

Here is an example of what is meant by “meaningful context”: ask your clients to use adjectives within storytelling. Students will view the adjectives as a useful tool to convey their messages accurately.

Storytelling is a task that is not well suited for young children. In this case, the clinician could first introduce a story and then have the client recall particular details. Therefore, more direct prompts can be given; clients can complete the task by embedding adjectives within their stories.

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Recent research has suggested spaced retrieval can be utilized to aid in children’s word learning, specifically of adjectives (Leonard et al., 2019; Leonard & Deevy, 2020). For more information on how to implement this strategy please refer to this [tutorial](https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2020_LSHSS-19i-00001#bib48) by Katherine Gordon.

* + Repeated spaced retrieval on novel word learning appears to be effective in both children who are typically developing and children with developmental language disorder. These concepts may be taught implicitly with a book and repetitive strategic exposure or explicitly with direct teaching with objects or picture cards.
	+ Generalization of concepts were noted in this research when children applied the newly learned adjectives to pictures of similar items that they had not previously seen.

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Books

Most children's books provide a great deal of adjectives that can be implemented into a book-based descriptive activity. Here are a few of our favorites:

[*Hairy, Scary, Ordinary & Quirky Jerky and Extra Perky.*](https://www.amazon.com/Hairy-Scary-Ordinary-Adjective-Categorical/dp/1575055546/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716484&sr=8-1&keywords=hairy+scary+ordinary+what+is+an+adjective%20,%20https://www.amazon.com/Quirky-Jerky-Extra-Perky-CATegorical-ebook/dp/B00HNXBV2S/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716484&sr=8-2&keywords=hairy+scary+ordinary+what+is+an+adjective) *Interest level: K-2 Reading Level: 3.1.*

[*Many Lucious Lollipops*,](https://www.amazon.com/Many-Luscious-Lollipops-Adjectives-Explore/dp/0698116410/ref%3Dsr_1_sc_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716536&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=Mary+lucios+lolipops) Ruth Heller. - This book uses a storybook format to describe what adjectives do and when they are used. It features many different adjectives is well-suited for an introductory lesson. *Interest level: PreK- 3 Reading level: 3.5.*

[*Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*,](https://www.amazon.com/Lillys-Purple-Plastic-Purse-Henkes/dp/0688128971/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716565&sr=8-1&keywords=Lilys+purple+plastic+purse) Kevin Henkes - This is a picture book that features a number of adjectives related to school. *Interest level: K-2 Reading level: 3.5.*

[*Exactly the Opposite*,](https://www.amazon.com/Exactly-Opposite-Tana-Hoban/dp/0688154735/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716587&sr=8-1&keywords=exactly+the+opposite) Tana Hoban- This book is made exclusively of pictures; there are no words! This book is perfect for a compare and contrast activity. *Interest level: N/A Reading level: N/A.*

Check it out here:

[*Is it Rough? Is it Smooth? Is it Shiny?*](https://www.amazon.com/Rough-Smooth-Shiny-Tana-Hoban/dp/0688038239/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716612&sr=8-1&keywords=is+it+rough+is+it+smooth+is+it+shiny) By: Tana Hoban - This is a wordless picture book and could easily be used for a descriptive activity. *Interest level: N/A Reading level: N/A.*

[*The Right Word; Roget and His Thesaurus*,](https://www.amazon.com/Right-Word-Roget-His-Thesaurus/dp/0802853854/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716642&sr=8-1&keywords=•%09The+Right+Word%3B+Roget+and+His+Thesaurus) Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet- This book introduces students to Thesaurus’. *Interest Level: K-3 Reading level: 4.1*

[*Things That Are the Most in the World*,](https://www.amazon.com/Things-That-Are-Most-World/dp/0689844492/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1548716661&sr=8-1&keywords=•%09Things+That+Are+the+Most+in+the+World) Judi Barret- This book focuses on comparative adjectives (i.e., most, best, etc.). *Interest level: K-2 Reading level: 4.8.*

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Games and Activities

[*Apples to Apples Jr*](https://www.amazon.com/Mattel-Games-Apples-Junior-Comparisons/dp/B00112CHD4/ref%3Dsr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1536856551&sr=8-8&keywords=adjective+games)***.-*** a fun board game that’s perfect for group therapy.

[*Show and Tell*](https://teachpreschool.org/2010/11/22/show-and-tell-day-in-preschool/)- can be used for group therapy or an individual session. Ask clients to bring in an object or a picture of an object from home. You can even provide a box of objects for clients to pick from. Encourage the client to use adjectives to describe the object.

* *Opposite Adjectives version of Show and Tell-* Show a picture of or pass around an object and ask for a descriptor word for that object, then ask for a describing word that is opposite. For younger children pictures could be provided with simple adjective opposites to choose from (e.g., “hot” “cold” “small” “large”).
* *Describe and Discover Show and Tell-* Ask children to bring in objects to share. After they share their object and its features, hide the objects. The children ask after the hidden object using adjectives, each object reveals the objects that have that adjective. The children then use adjectives that differentiate objects. When the correct object is revealed, the game begins again.

Games and Activities

* *Guess What’s in the Bag*-can be used for group therapy or an individual session. Put a few objects in an opaque bag (e.g., playdough, a paperclip, cheerios, balled-up tinfoil, etc.), ask the client to reach into the bag and grab one object. Prompt the client to use adjectives to describe the object aloud (e.g., “what does the object feel like?”); ask them to guess what the object is.
* *Guess What’s in the Bag*-can be used for group therapy or an individual session. Put a few objects in an opaque bag (e.g., playdough, a paperclip, cheerios, balled-up tinfoil, etc.), ask the client to reach into the bag and grab one object. Prompt the client to use adjectives to describe the object aloud (e.g., “what does the object feel like?”); ask them to guess what the object is.



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* *Describing Unusual or Everyday Tangible Objects-* Children can be asked to describe (e.g., using color, shape, size, etc.). Group objects by like adjectives.
* *Holiday themed descriptive activities*- Make it fun! Describing a pumpkin, a sleigh, hearts, etc. create word webs to describe these items. An extra add on activity would be for the children to then write stories including all the descriptor words in the web.

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Websites

*[Literacy](http://www.mracdpresent.com/)**[Jukebox](http://www.mracdpresent.com/)*- this is a website and an app. It has a number of songs recorded about different grammatical concepts- including adjectives.

[*Turtle Diary*](https://www.turtlediary.com/games/adjectives.html)- this is a website that features many educational games. The link provided will take you to games that are specifically geared for practice with adjectives.

Please visit [our Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/sugarlanguage/relative-clause/) for additional resources and activities:

Pinterest Q&A:

What is Pinterest? Pinterest is a social media platform that serves as an electronic bulletin board. Many SLPs use it as a way to electronically “bookmark” (i.e., save) activities for future sessions.

How much does it cost? It’s free! However, you must create an account in order to access the SUGAR Language boards or use the website in general.

How do I use it? Please check-out the following link for an in-depth explanation of all things [Pinterest.](https://www.lifewire.com/how-to-use-pinterest-3486578)

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