

# Concepts—KS1 and KS2

## What are concepts?

Concepts are used to describe specific features such as location, size, order and quantity. Some examples of concepts that may appear in everyday life are: **before / after, first / next / last, more / less, top / bottom**. Concepts can be tricky for people to understand as they can mean different things depending on the context in which they are used. For example, a chair may be 'big' in one place but when put next to a 'bigger' chair it becomes 'small'.

## How do I spot a child who has difficulties with concepts?

An individual who has difficulty with concepts may find it hard to:

- Follow directions such as "Before you get into groups, put the date and learning objectives at the top of your page and collect a worksheet from the front." / "While you're finishing up that task, have a think about your project for next lesson."
- Understand and answer questions which include concepts e.g. "What will happen after you add X to the test-tube?"
- Understand everyday language e.g. "We're leaving in half an hour."
- Understand some classroom related vocabulary e.g. "greater than / less than" "heavy / light"
- Understand exam question terminology "This text is from the beginning of a short story." / "You need to think about the whole of the source." / "Answer either Question 2 or Question 3 which begins on page 18." / "When Sean works more than 8 hours a day, he is paid over-time for each hour he works more than 8 hours." / "Which metal is the least reactive?"
- Use concepts within their spoken or written language

## How do I support understanding of concepts?

It is important to remember that it is easier for all children to learn if the activities are real and relevant to them. If they do not relate to what you are talking about then they are less likely to understand and remember what you have taught them. Pictures can be quite abstract and should be the 'last resort' as a method of teaching, whereas using the child themselves, real objects or daily routines & activities are much more 'real.'

Always make sure you consider both parts of the concepts as a child will learn 1 before the other i.e. they will usually learn 'first' before 'last' and 'same' before 'different'. Always use as many different ways of reinforcing the concepts as you can as this will help the child to generalise what he or she has learnt rather than learn the concept within 1 context only.

## How can I support children who have difficulties with concepts?

### Top/bottom

Using steps/stairs can be a very good way of developing understanding of top / bottom. When you are walking up the stairs with the child, talk about going up to the top and when walking down talk about going down to the bottom.

At the park or when playing outside, talk about going up the steps to the top of the slide and sliding down to the bottom. When reading a story, reinforce that you start reading from the top of the page and if writing talk about writing their name at the top / bottom as preferred.

If you feel understanding is developing you could use a busy picture by selecting things for the child to find. Ensure they are at the top or bottom of the picture and give this as the clue where help is needed. If it is not and they find the item as requested then talk about where it is in the picture. i.e. top or bottom. Jigsaw puzzles can also be useful as you can look at the picture on the box to see where the piece belongs i.e. top or bottom.

### Centre/middle

You can take a piece of paper and fold it in half bringing the 2 shortest sides together, then fold it in half again bringing the 2 shortest sides together. Crease the lines firmly and then open up the paper and find the centre point of the page using the creases, it should be really obvious and then put a dot in the centre so the child can see it. You can then explain how we also call this the middle.



Many board games have something going on in the middle/centre of the board. A target board will have a centre dot (many wii games for children will show this). We also have a 'pupil' in the centre of our eye, look in the mirror together and talk about this.

You could also play 'piggy in the middle' where you pass the ball and take it in turns to be in the middle. Reinforce 'middle' by saying 'daddy's in the middle', 'mummy's in the middle' etc.

### Part/whole/half

When walking around can you see the whole of something or only part of it because it's partly hidden by something else. Reinforce 'part' by talking about the things you can only see part of e.g. the tops of trees that are behind houses, the corner of a book that is under an object etc. Or point out if the child has eaten the whole of something e.g. packet of crisps / sausage / a piece of fruit etc. or part of something e.g. some beans, a slice of cake (or pizza) that they have seen cut up. You could perhaps talk about how many parts the cake has been cut into etc.

You could play a game when you cover up most of an object or picture and talk about how you can only see part of the picture. Then ask the child to guess what the picture or object is. If they do not know show them half of the picture and see if they can guess what it is. Remember to reinforce the concept half. Finish this by looking at the whole picture/object and talk about what it is and reinforce that you can now see the whole picture.

## First/last

You can use your child's toys e.g. plastic frogs to develop understanding of 'first / last' by talking about how the frogs all need to have a drink and they are waiting their turn to get to the water. Have the first frog positioned facing the front and all the other frogs placed in a line behind the first (all still facing the front). I have asked the child to change the frog that will be first to have water. E.g. Now the purple frog must be last to get water can you make the purple frog last and so on. It is likely to motivate the child more if you use items they recognise or are interested in. You could also line the toys up in front of the child and say that they are coming to see them etc. as an additional idea.

You could also use a 'feely bag' of items and take 2 items (1 at a time) out of the bag and then ask the child to tell you which did you take out of the bag first / last etc. If they do not know, then tell them. i.e. This is what I took out of the bag first, it was the rabbit. The rabbit was first out of the bag, and so on. Keeping it to 2 items initially will make it easier as there will only be a first and a last item. Include an additional item once you feel understanding is developing well.

You could also talk about daily routines to reinforce first and last. i.e. what is the last thing we do before going to bed. What is the first thing we do when we get in to school etc. When lining up for assembly or to leave the classroom you could take the opportunity to talk about who is first in line and who is last etc. There is a poem in the appendix called '**How do I know which is first**' that you may like to use to reinforce these concepts.

## Second/third

When lining up to leave the classroom talk about who is first, *second*, *third* or last in line. When queuing up to pay for something in the shop talk about who is first, second, third etc. When waiting in the lunch queue, or in a queue to take your turn on an activity you could also reinforce this. When playing a board game or any turn taking game talk about who is first, 2<sup>nd</sup> etc. Racing games are a lovely way to reinforce who was first, second & third.

## Left/right

Use everyday routines and activities to develop the child's knowledge of concepts as these will be more meaningful to the child and therefore easier for them to understand and remember. e.g. when walking around the school or the local area talk about if you are turning left or right. You can also do this in the car and ask the child to look for the indicator. Show the direction with your hands to reinforce this.

When you are about to eat a meal, talk about which hand you are holding the fork and knife in. You could also play with puppets putting one on each hand and talking about which hand you have used as you put them on. Additionally you could talk about which hand does the child write with.

You could also do an action based activity or song such as 'Hokey Cokey' as you will sing things like 'put your left arm in / left arm out etc.



## **Before/after**

When your child is going to bed, talk about how they brush their teeth 'before' they go to bed. When they are about to eat dinner, talk about how we wash our hands before we eat and how they have pudding/dessert 'after' dinner.

You could talk about the content of a familiar story after you have just read it and reinforce the concepts before / after whilst you do this. For example with Goldilocks and the 3 bears you could talk about how Goldilocks sat on a broke baby bears chair. Then ask what happened before this stage and then ask what happened after this part of the story. You could use 3 picture sequencing cards and talk about what happens in them. Select the one in the middle and ask the child to tell you what happens after this picture, before this picture etc.

You could also play a very simple action game where you ask the child to do 2 things e.g. clap your hands and then close your eyes. Reinforce the concepts whilst you explain what you want them to do. Then ask the child to tell you what they did after they clapped their hands or what did you do before you closed your eyes.

## **Beginning/end**

Sit with your child and watch a program they like, once it is finished talk about what happened at the beginning (tell your child at this stage so they understand what beginning is) and then talk about what happened at the end. Move on to asking questions about the beginning and end of the program they have just watched

When doing phonics / reading practise you could reinforce which sound is at the beginning of the word and at the end of the word. There are many board / racing games where you could reinforce the beginning of the game and the end. 'Mazes' will easily lead to you talking about where to begin and where to end. There are puzzle activities where the child starts at the beginning of the line and needs to find where the line ends and what is at the end of the line. When you open a book to read it, talk about how you are starting at the beginning of the book. When the book is finished reinforce that you are now at the end of the book.

You could talk about what the child did when they first woke up and reinforce how this is the beginning of the day. Talk a little about what the children do before bed and talk about how this is at the end of the day.

## **Few/fewest**

When playing a game talk about who has the most counters or the least/fewest. If playing marbles talk about who won at the end as they had the most and who lost because they had the fewest. If children have sweets count them up and talk about who has the fewest left. If colouring a picture who used the most colours or the fewest etc.



## Nearest/furthest

When walking through the park, talk about this tree being the nearest, but that one's the furthest (point them out to be sure the child knows which trees you are talking about).

Using toys, place one close by and another on the other side of the room and say 'the rabbit is nearest to you and the doll is furthest away'. Exaggerate what is near and what is far at first to clearly reinforce the concept.

In circle time talk about who is sitting nearest the teacher and who is the furthest from the teacher. Name a child and ask who is sitting nearest to them etc. You could play a game where the child/children are looking for a hidden object. When they are moving towards the hiding place talk about how they are nearer and if moving away talk about how they are further from the object.

## Above/below

When looking for something, talk about where you are looking for it, e.g. above your head, below a particular surface or item such as a table or chair etc. etc. If there is a clear line separating the top and bottom of a wall talk about what is on the wall above that line and then talk about what is below that line. You could also stick pictures on a wall with blue tac. Then ask the child to stick a token above or below one of the pictures selected.

If you look up is there something above your head. If you look down what are you standing on. Throw a ball into the air and talk about how it is above your head. You could also ask a child to clap their hands above their head, below the table etc.

## Front/back

Use everyday opportunities to reinforce these concepts, for example when getting dressed after PE talk about how the buttons of their tee-shirt go at the front and how the label goes at the back

Point out when playing with toy objects which is the front and which is the back. You could also ask the child to place stickers on the front or back of a toy. Talk about the differences about the front and the back of things e.g. people, dolls. Compare the differences between the front of a familiar book and the back of the book. Talk about the front and back of your house, the doors etc.

## Forward/backward

Use everyday routines and activities to further develop the child's knowledge of concepts in language. For example when moving around the home or school reinforce when walking forwards to go somewhere and talk about / show what walking backwards would be like. You could also have the children carrying out certain physical tasks when moving forward or backwards. Cars go forwards and backwards when reversing. Some games ask you to go back 1 or 2 spaces if you land on certain squares so the concepts can be reinforced at this time.

## Same/different

Use your environment to teach as you will be surrounded by things in the classroom/home you can use. Also everyday activities can be useful such as finding both shoes in a pair when getting dressed in the morning or redressed after P.E. Talk about if they are the same and why and if they are not, talk about how they are not the same they are different and why. Talk about the attributes of those around e.g. who has brown hair and therefore the same colour hair and whose hair colour is different. Who has blue / brown eyes etc. Who is 4 and therefore the same age. Those who are 5 are not the same age they are a different age and so on. Once achieved at this level you can move on to slightly more complex understanding when we start to think about what is the 'same' and what is 'different'. i.e. something can be the same colour but a different size or a different object entirely. You could have a small yellow ball and small yellow block.

There is a poem in the appendix called '**Two different shoes**' which you may find useful in helping to reinforce these concepts. It would be beneficial to the children if real objects were used during the reading of the poem to reinforce learning.

## Over/under

When your child is playing with his/her toys such as a toy train, talk about the train going over the bridge or under the bridge (demonstrate this as you speak). If when you go out for a walk you walk over a bridge talk about how you are walking over the bridge. Then look over the side and talk about what is going under the bridge e.g. road/cars, water etc.

You could play a game such as 'piggy in the middle' and talk about if you are throwing the ball over the child's head or under their legs to get it to the child on the other side.

The story 'we're going on a bear hunt' is a lovely way to reinforce these concepts. You can have simple instructions such as can you jump over the hoop, line etc. or hide under the table (if playing hide and seek).

## Most/least

It can be most practical and relevant to use the activities carried out every day to develop a child's knowledge of concepts in language. For example if completing a counting activity talk about which is the most or least, or talk about who has eaten the most (or least) of their dinner so far etc.

When playing a game, work out who has won because they have the most counters, pictures at the end etc. If playing with counters at school/home change the amounts the children have and ask them to work out who has the most and who has the least and explain why. If everyone has the same, talk about how everyone has an equal amount.

If dividing up sweets at home give different amounts to each child and then talk about who has the most/least etc and how do they need to change what they have so everyone has the same, which is fairer.

## In front/behind

Use everyday opportunities to reinforce these concepts, e.g when you are looking for something, where did you find it? Was it in front of the chair, behind the chair etc. Play hide and seek and talk about where each person chose to hide. It is very common for children to hide behind sofas, curtains etc, therefore providing the perfect opportunities for discussion.

You could also play a treasure hunt game where you hide items around a room. Place some of those items in front or behind objects and reinforce the placement when they are found.

Jigsaw content (pictures) can often lend themselves to discussion of placement words. For example a farmyard jigsaw could be used to reinforce these concepts by talking about where the animals / farmyard objects are standing. E.g behind a wall and in front of a tree. There is a story in the appendix called '**Naughty Nellie is at it again**' which you may find useful to reinforce these concepts.



## Between

When queuing up to leave the classroom etc talk about who is standing on either side of a named child, so the child is between Paul and Jenny for example. When a child crosses the road with his parents and holds your hand he is standing between you. Point this out before you cross the road. When sitting down to eat talk about who is sitting between named people. When out walking you could look at 2 large object e.g. trees and talk about what you can see between them. Draw a picture for the child with 2 large objects e.g. a house and a tree and ask the child to draw some flowers between them. You could also talk about objects on a table and ask the child to put the pencil between the 2 pots (for example). During PE you could set up a 'course' where the children have to hop / jump / run between the posts. When playing football talk about how you score a goal by kicking the ball between the posts.

## Naughty Nellie is at it again



(prepositions story – with *big / little*) (also the negatives *not / no / n't*)

Nellie was a rag doll. A very old rag doll who now belonged to a little girl called Megan. Megan loved her doll, especially as it once belonged to her mummy and before that it had belonged to her nanny May. Nellie was a very special rag doll. More special than Megan knew because Nellie came to life when no-one was around. Nellie was always getting into mischief as she loved to play hide and seek.

Often when Megan came home from school she would look for Nellie and she would not be able to find her. She would go to the place she had left Nellie (usually in her bedroom) and would not find her there. Of course Megan thought she was just confused and had forgotten that she had moved Nellie, but she hadn't. Nellie was up to her usual mischief.

Nellie waited while Megan left for school one sunny morning. As soon as she heard the door close she jumped **off** the shelf she was sitting **on** and looked **around** her to see where she could hide. Nellie found a new box **on** the floor **next to** Megan's bed. It was a *big* shiny box with a *big* shiny lid **on top**. Mmmmmm thought Nellie this could be a good place to hide but for now I'll keep looking.

Then Nellie saw Megan's doll's house. She had hidden in this before. The doll's house was really *big* and was great fun. Nellie squeezed **in** to the space **behind** the doll's house and looked **through** the window at the **back**. This was a good place, no one would see her here, but it was a bit *small* and squishy and not very comfortable. She then walked around to the **front** of the house, opened the front door and walked **in** to the lounge. The doll's house was *big* with lots of furniture **inside**. The arm chair was too *small* to hide **behind** but Nellie thought she could hide **behind** the sofa. She stayed there for a few minutes but got bored.

Next Nellie went **in** to the bedroom and hid **under** the bed but that wasn't comfortable at all, she was too *big* and the bed was too *small* and was squashing her tummy. She sat **on** the bed while she thought about where to go **next**. Nellie remembered the shiny new box with a shiny silver lid **on top**. She quickly jumped **off** the bed and ran **out** of the house.

Nellie stood **in front** of the box and looked **up**. The box was *big*. So *big* that even when she stood on tip toes she couldn't reach the lid to take it **off**. Nellie could easily hide **behind** the box and no one would be able to see her, but she really wanted to see **inside**. Nellie found some building blocks **under** the shelf and put one **on top** of another to make steps. She put the steps **next to** the box so she could climb **up** them. It was hard work and by the time Nellie had made the steps high enough to reach the lid at the **top** of the box she was very tired. Nellie rested for a while **next to** the steps before climbing to the **top**.



The lid of the box was *big* and really heavy and took all of Nellie's strength to lift it **up** and push it away. The lid fell **down** to the floor with quite a bang. Nellie leaned **over** the edge of the box and looked **inside**. It was a long way **down**. If Nellie jumped **inside** she was sure she would hurt herself.



## Naughty Nellie is at it again

Nellie had an idea, a really good idea. She would find a cushion. She carefully climbed **down** the blocks and looked **around**. There was a pink cushion sticking **out** from **under** Megan's bed. Nellie dragged it to the steps she had made and carefully pulled it **up** the steps as she climbed to the **top**. Then very slowly she pushed it over the **top** of the box. The cushion fell **down** to the floor with a thud. Nellie looked **in** the box and found that it didn't look like such a long way down any more. She carefully climbed **over** the edge and holding **on** tightly with her hands lowered herself **in** to the box. Once her whole body was dangling she let go and **down** she went until she landed **on** the cushion. The cushion was soft and thick so Nellie did not hurt herself at all.



Nellie was **in** the box, how exciting. Sitting on the cushion she looked **around** her at the walls of the box. She was disappointed to find they were not shiny on the **inside**, but decided this was definitely a good hiding place. I will come back again later Nellie thought, when Megan is ready to come home from school. She will never think to look for me here. Nellie stood **up** and reached **up** as far as she could but she couldn't reach the top of the box, not even when she stood **on** the cushion. There was nothing Nellie could do, she had no way of getting **out**. So she lay **on** the soft cushion, **closed** her eyes and went to sleep. Megan will find me she thought, as soon as she gets home from school.



## How do I know which is first?

First or last I get confused

As I don't always know which one to use

First comes first my friend did say

But that didn't help me in any way.

First wash your hands before you eat

My gran to me would say

And brushing your teeth before going to bed

Should be the last job of the day.



My sister was the first to be born

And is older than me it's true

My little brother was the last

He is only 2

I like to be the first one

In the line for school

Once I won first prize in a raffle

That was really cool

I was given a lovely teddy bear

all cuddly big and blue

you don't get a prize for coming last

it's really sad but true



I think I feel clearer now about what is first and last

It just takes time to understand

If you're not sure just ask.

## Two different shoes

You can't wear different socks  
my mum did say

With a smile upon her face

You must have two which are  
the same

I washed some yesterday.

You can't wear different shoes to school

One black one and one blue

But I can't find another black one

Or even one that's blue

My mum went off to look for me

To see what she could do

To find a pair of shoes for me

Two black ones or two blue

She looked under the sofa

And looked inside my room

She looked out in the kitchen

Where we keep the broom.

But nowhere could she find me

Two shoes which are the same

I only had two different shoes

And didn't know who to blame

It could have been my brother James

Who was too young to see

The shoes we wear should be the same

He's not as clever as me.



I keep on looking and I see

The toe of a shiny shoe

Peeking from under my toy sack

Is it black or is it blue?

Now I have a pair of shoes

Whose colour are the same

It's time to go to school said mum

And we left the house with James.

