

Synonyms and Antonyms

What are synonyms?

A synonym is a word that can replace another word and still carry the same meaning

- e.g. 'hot' – boiling / warm / sizzling
'big' – huge / gigantic / massive
'happy' – ecstatic / joyful / excited

What are antonyms?

An antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning to another word

- e.g. hot / cold
big / small
happy / sad

Why are synonyms and antonyms used?

- They support us to provide more complex and descriptive narratives.

e.g. Using our knowledge of synonyms, we can create a more descriptive narrative (story).

Please see an example of this below:

"It was a **dark** night and the rain was **coming down** quickly. I could hear **loud noises** and see **bursts** of lightning. I felt **scared**."



"It was a **gloomy** night and the rain was **pouring rapidly**. I could hear a **deafening rumble** and see **flashes** of lightning. I felt **terrified**."

- Our knowledge of these helps us to understand written text and spoken language.

e.g. If a book reads: "The girl's emerald eyes were glistening in the sunlight", we know that the girl has green eyes.

If a book reads: "The ferocious lion let out a thunderous roar", we know that the lion is scary and has a very loud roar.



- We can use antonyms and synonyms to help us understand what a word means and this can be used as a strategy to cue us and identify an unknown word as well as remembering how a word is used.

If the word we are learning is 'happy' we can use the following cues:

'Happy' is an emotion. It is the opposite of 'sad' (antonym)

Other words that have the same meaning are: ecstatic / joyful / excited (synonym)

- They allow us to add more meaning to our message e.g. You could say: "The girl was **happy** because it was her birthday" or "The girl was **ecstatic** because it was her birthday"

How do I spot a child who finds synonyms and antonyms tricky?

- Difficulty understanding and inferring the key information from a story.
- May misinterpret what they have been told or read.
- May use words in the wrong context.
- Will struggle to identify how words are linked e.g. 'connected' and 'joined' mean the same thing and 'smooth' and 'rough' are opposites but both refer to how something feels.
- May repeat the same words within their writing or spoken language.
- May find it tricky to make their narrative descriptive.
- May mix up opposite concepts in curriculum topics e.g. aerobic vs anaerobic respiration or independent vs dependent variable

How can I support children who find synonyms and antonyms difficult?

- Ask the student to repeat back what they have understood.
- Ask the student to highlight the words in a text that they do not understand.
- Repeat and/or reword an instruction or sentence. E.g. you could simplify 'horizontal' by asking the student to draw a line 'across the page' and 'vertical' would be 'going up or down the page'.
- Ask them to identify different words that could be used to mean the same thing. You may need to offer some examples to begin with.
- Highlight when a synonym is used in place of another word e.g. "I used the word 'ferocious' to describe the lion, instead of 'scary'."

How can I support children who find synonyms and antonyms difficult?

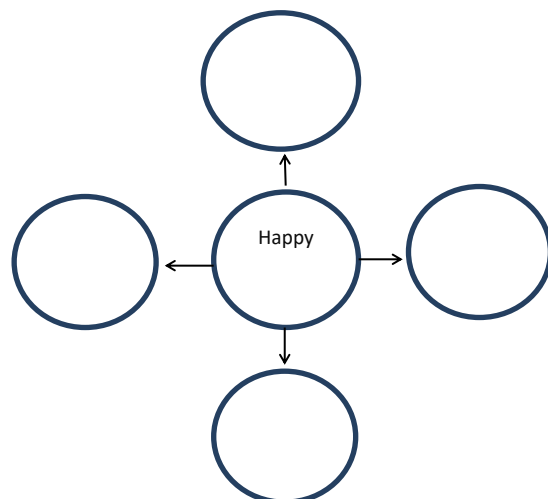
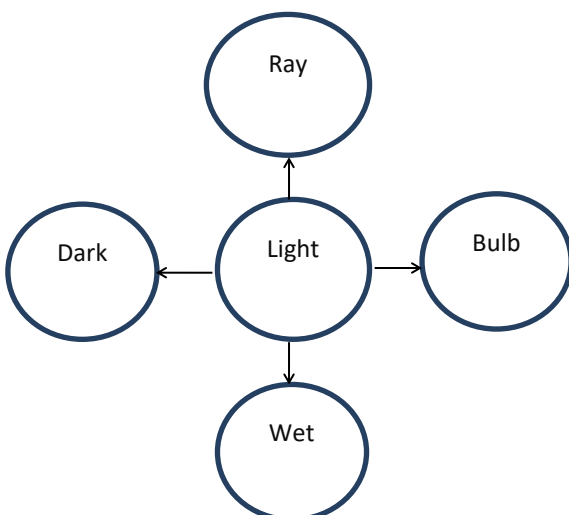
- Have a list of different words that can be used to describe something (this could be on a whiteboard or display, or a crib sheet to be stuck in their workbook).

Happy	Excited	Pretty	Beautiful
	Cheerful		Attractive
	Overjoyed		Lovely
	Delighted		Handsome
	Thrilled		Cute
	Merry		Fetching
	Elated		Charming
			Picturesque

- Encourage the student to use dictionaries and the internet to identify synonyms and antonyms for a word.
- When a new word is identified, model the word in different contexts and where possible using a visual cue.
- When introducing two new words that are antonyms (opposite), start with just one of the words and introduce the second once the student is confident with the meaning of the first word.

Word maps

Write a word in the middle of a word map and some words around the middle—these words should include a synonym (same meaning), an antonym (opposite) and unrelated word. The student should then try to identify the synonym / word with the same meaning.



Word maps can also be used to support the learning of new vocabulary or to expand on words that can be used to describe something. This time write the new word in the middle of the word map and ask the student to write as many words around it that mean the same thing. You could also try to think of antonyms (opposites) for the new word.

Odd one out

Using topic vocabulary, give the student a set of three words (two words that have the same meaning and one that is not related). The student needs to identify the two words that go together (synonyms) and explain their meaning / why they go together. See examples below:

Scared	Terrified	Ecstatic
Rumble	Walk	Noise
Soft	Hard	Light
Dark	Dull	Day
Last	Final	Different
Shiny	Fury	Glistening
Petite	Small	Polite

Pairs

The student is given pairs of topic words and they then have to match the words with their opposites e.g. 'happy' vs 'sad'. It will be helpful for the student to then discuss the meanings of the word pairs with a peer or adult. Below are some examples of words which may come up in the curriculum. This activity can be adapted to include specific curriculum vocabulary or words which are relevant to the student's everyday life.

Evaporation	Condensation
Formal	Informal
Alkaline	Acid
Horizontal	Vertical
Latitude	Longitude
Portrait	Landscape
Convex	Concave
Similarities	Difference

Describing a scene

Start by choosing a scene for the student to describe. This could be an image within a textbook or a still shot from a film clip. Talk through what is happening and identify five words that can be replaced with another word (synonym) to better describe what is happening. This activity can be adapted to include written texts. Instead the student should highlight five words within the paragraph or page they can swap with another word. It may be helpful to have a list of synonyms they could use and have a discussion with peers or adults to identify different synonyms.



The woman's facial expression:

Astonished
Shocked
Aghast

Table cloth:

Lacy
Ornate
Intricate

The man's suit:

Crisp
Smart
Tidy