



Tilly's Voyage into Vocabulary

Unit guide and overview

An early communication and language intervention programme designed to support children in this prime area of learning within the EYFS.

6 weeks

10 minutes a day

1:1 or small group



PROGRAMME SUMMARY

About Tilly's Voyage into Vocabulary



This six-week intervention programme supports children who need additional help to develop and extend their vocabulary knowledge and use of language.

A rich vocabulary is one of the strongest predictors of children's future academic success. Vocabulary knowledge underpins reading comprehension, writing, spoken language and learning across the curriculum (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Children with limited vocabulary are at greater risk of difficulties with literacy, accessing classroom learning and communicating with others. The vocabulary gap can emerge before school entry and widen over time if it is not addressed (Hart & Risley, 1995; Education Endowment Foundation, 2021).

Effective vocabulary teaching goes beyond simply introducing new words. Children need repeated exposure, meaningful contexts and opportunities to hear, discuss and use vocabulary in a range of situations.

Each week, children join Tilly on her voyage into vocabulary. Carefully selected target words are explicitly taught, explored and revisited through imaginative play and purposeful discussion, while practitioners monitor and track progress over time.

6 weeks

programme length

10 minutes

maximum daily session

**1:1 or
small group**

teacher or teaching assistant

Reception

year group

**Communication
& Language**

EYFS prime area



What does the intervention support?



The aim of this intervention is to ensure that all children are supported to:

- ✓ Develop understanding and use of new vocabulary.
- ✓ Increase receptive and expressive vocabulary.
- ✓ Categorise words by meaning and attributes.
- ✓ Develop semantic associations between words (e.g. synonyms, functions, locations, features).
- ✓ Expand understanding and use of action words (verbs).
- ✓ Improve knowledge and use of verb tenses (past, present and future).
- ✓ Construct grammatically accurate sentences.
- ✓ Improve oral language skills that support reading comprehension and written language.
- ✓ Build confidence in using language for learning and social communication.

The progression

Children secure **Tier 1** everyday words and expand into **Tier 2** vocabulary. Week by week they move from naming and describing, to categorising and making associations, understanding concepts and comparisons, and finally using new words in complete, grammatically accurate sentences.

How to deliver this unit

01

Before you begin

- Use the **Identification and Progression Toolkit** to identify which children should take part.
- Decide whether to deliver **1:1 or in a small group**.
- Set aside a maximum of **10 minutes** daily for **6 weeks**.
- Gather the resources for the week.



02

During the intervention

- Children join Tilly on her voyage into vocabulary.
- Explicitly teach the week's target vocabulary.
- Explore and revisit new words through imaginative play and purposeful discussion.
- Give repeated opportunities to hear, discuss and use each word.



03

Monitor progress

- Record observations in the **Practitioner Notes**.
- Keep the **Participation Log** up to date.
- Use the **Identification and Progression Toolkit** to record progress over time.

Keep it short: sessions run for a maximum of **10 minutes** daily, delivered **1:1 or in a small group** by a teacher or teaching assistant. Each week focuses on a particular area of vocabulary.

Building children's vocabulary



1

TIER 1

Everyday words

The basic words children use and hear every day.

e.g. happy, house, run

2

TIER 2

Academic words

Words used across learning to describe, compare and explain.

e.g. compare, narrow, shorter

3

TIER 3

Technical terms

Subject-specific words linked to particular topics.

Where does this intervention focus?

The programme is designed to embed **Tier 1** and expand into **Tier 2** vocabulary.

Embed Tier 1

Secure the everyday words children need to name, describe and talk about the world around them, such as jungle, tree, animal and fruit.

Expand into Tier 2

Introduce words for sorting, sequencing, comparing and describing, such as same, different, before, after, opposite and next to.

Six-week programme overview



Join Tilly on her voyage into the vocabulary jungle. Each week has a particular area of vocabulary it focuses on.

FOCUS

KEY VOCABULARY

Week
1

Introducing and building key vocabulary

Children learn and use key words for the jungle, its animals, fruit and colours.

jungle, tree, animal, fruit, climbing, sitting, colour words

Week
2

Categorising

Children sort words into groups such as fruit, animals, clothes and weather.

fruit, animal, dress, clothes, hot, cold, sunny, warm, rain

Week
3

Categorising and association

Children decide what is the same, what is different and what goes together.

different, same, goes together, animal, fruit

Week
4

Concepts

Children learn words for order, position and size, alongside action words.

before, after, first, second, last, above, below, tall, short, under, next to, verbs

Week
5

Comparisons and opposites

Children compare size, speed and weight, and find opposites.

opposite, bigger, biggest, smaller, smallest, big/small, tall/short, fast/slow, heavy/light

Week
6

Building sentences

Children build sentences that say who is doing what, and where, including sentences with 'not'.

Who? Doing? What? Where? Not

Resources: Weeks 1 to 3



Week 1

Introducing and building key vocabulary

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Jungle scene - cutting and sticking
- ☐ Noun pairs game
- ☐ Tilly card
- ☐ Jungle colouring sheet
- ☐ Word backpack
- ☐ Word map template

Week 2

Categorising

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Cutting and sticking lunchbox sheet
- ☐ Get Tilly dressed sheet
- ☐ Jungle and sea animal sorting
- ☐ Jungle colouring sheet
- ☐ Word backpack
- ☐ Word map template

Week 3

Categorising and association

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Matching pair cards
- ☐ Odd one out sheet
- ☐ Complete the picture sheet
- ☐ Name game board
- ☐ Word backpack
- ☐ Word map template

Resources: Weeks 4 to 6



Week 4

Concepts

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Jungle places picture cards
- ☐ Word backpack
- ☐ Word map template

Week 5

Comparisons and opposites

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Opposites picture cards
- ☐ Vine strips cutting sheet
- ☐ Children's scissors
- ☐ Jungle animal picture cards
- ☐ Three sorting hoops
- ☐ Monkey picture cards
- ☐ Word backpack
- ☐ Word map template

Week 6

Building sentences

- ☐ Teddy bear
- ☐ Suitcase/bag to store resources
- ☐ Tilly's voyage into vocabulary session map
- ☐ Sentence-building boards and picture cards
- ☐ Word backpack

Review and next steps



At the end of the **six-week** intervention, review all the evidence gathered during the programme, including the **Practitioner Notes, Participation Log, Identification and Progression Toolkit** records and your daily observations.

Consider

- Does the child understand and use the target vocabulary from each week?
- Do they use new words independently, in play and in conversation?
- How consistent are your observations across sessions?
- What is the child's individual rate of progress?

Deciding what happens next

Sufficient progress

The child no longer requires targeted intervention in this area at this time.

Further cycle

The child would benefit from another cycle of targeted intervention.

Additional concerns

Discuss with the school SENDCo. Further personalised support, monitoring or advice from outside agencies, such as Speech and Language Therapy, may be needed.

IDENTIFY



DELIVER



ASSESS



MONITOR



DECIDE NEXT STEPS