

Colourful Semantics

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Services for Children and Families

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Workshop Aims

To build an **awareness and understanding** of:

- The **components of a sentence**
- The **Colourful Semantics** approach
- **How to use** Colourful Semantics to support a child's understanding of question words, and the development of spoken sentence structure and vocabulary
- How Colourful Semantics can be used to support **written language** skills
- To feel **confident in using** the Colourful Semantics approach with your child

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Activity

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Some example sentences:

- The girls are splashing in the sea
- The boy is catching a colourful ball
- The mum is sunbathing in the deck chair
- The girl and boy are building a sand house
- The girl is sailing a boat on the sea
- The big black and white birds are flying in the sky
- At the weekend, the children played in the sea at the beach

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But what do we actually need to build a strong sentence?



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We can use the following components to build a strong sentence:

- 1) A **doing word** (a verb) e.g. 'is building'
- 2) **Who is doing the action** (the subject) e.g. 'the boy'
- 3) **What they are doing it to** (an object) e.g. 'a sand castle'
- 4) **Where the action is taking place** e.g. 'at the beach'
- 5) **When the action is taking place** (the day/time) e.g. 'at the weekend'
- 6) **What something is like** (adjectives/describing words) 'big', 'pretty' etc.

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As well as the components we need to create meaning, we also need to use some grammatical features:

- Articles such as, 'a' and 'the'
- Helper verbs e.g. 'is sitting'

e.g. 'The boy is building a sandcastle'

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When sentence building is difficult, children may:

- Use shorter sentences e.g. 'eat cake'
- Omit small grammatical parts of the sentence e.g. 'boy throw ball'
- Make errors with word order e.g. 'throw ball boy'
- Overuse a generic word e.g. 'getting juice in' in place of 'pouring juice in'
- Use the wrong word for something e.g. using 'door' for 'gate'

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What difficulties with sentence building have you noticed with your children?



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What is Colourful Semantics?

A **visual sentence building approach** to support children to develop:

- Understanding of 'wh' questions
- A wider vocabulary and increased range of verbs
- Increased sentence length and complexity
- Increased awareness and use of grammatical words in a sentence e.g. articles ('a' and 'the') and helper verbs ('is', 'was' etc)

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- Each key component in a sentence is allocated a colour, visual question cue card and a Makaton sign



- Introduce one sentence component/colour at a time
- There are a number of stages for a child to progress through
- It can be used 1:1 with a child, in small groups, and as a whole class approach to support spoken and written language
- It can be used by parents/carers, educational staff, and speech and language therapists
- It was originally developed by Alison Bryan

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Recommended Resources

- *Colourful Semantics- A resource for Developing Children's Spoken and Written Language Skills.*
NHS Forth Valley (2020).



- *In Print 3* www.Widgit.com
Design personalised symbol materials to print



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Colour Coding System

Who?	Orange
What doing?	Yellow
What?	Green
Where?	Blue
When?	Brown
To who?	Pink
Why?	Purple
How?	Black

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Key

- Visual question cue cards e.g. 
- Makaton sign 
- Symbol cards e.g. 
- Sentence strip e.g. 

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What doing?

'What doing?' (verb)

 is stirring	 is eating	 is building
 is watching	 is carrying	 is wearing

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What doing? (verb)
Activities

- Give your child the visual question cue card to hold up when they hear **‘what doing’** words in stories
- **Emphasise action words during everyday activities** e.g. ‘pouring’, ‘pouring the milk’ etc.
- Take it in turns to choose a ‘what doing’ word card to **act out**
- **Model ‘doing’ words during PE** and try these together
- Make **pairs, lotto, and snap games** with ‘what doing’ picture cards



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Who? (subject)
Activities



the witch



the policeman



the girl



Tiddler



the dragon



the man



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Who? (subject)
Activities

- Use your child’s reading book to talk about **‘who?’** you can see in the pictures, as well as what actions they are doing (**‘what doing?’**)
- Play sorting games by asking your child to match **‘who’** and **‘what doing’** pictures to the right question cue cards



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Start by.....

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Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence (1)

- Introduce the **two coloured question cue cards and bricks together**
- Have **two piles of symbols** for each sentence component e.g. a pile of 'who' words and a pile of 'what doing' words
- Take it in turns to select a 'who?' and a 'what doing?' symbol card to place on the sentence strip.
- See our example on the next slide

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Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence



Who?



What doing?



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What?


What's going?


the girl


is jumping



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Build a 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence (3)

- Encourage your child to say the full sentence and point to each block as your child says each word.
- Adults may need to remodel the full sentence with all the grammatical features, such as, helper verb 'is'. Use the blocks to draw your child's attention to these.



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Step up: 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence (4)

- The child can be shown a main picture to build the sentence about.
- Give the picture pictures that match the vocabulary of the sentence
- They will now need to order the symbol pictures and place them in the correct sequence on the sentence strip to describe the picture.
- They can use the visual question cue cards and bricks to support them with the structure

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Step up: 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence

- Next the child can be given a selection of symbols for each sentence component
- Ask the child to select the symbols needed to make their sentence about the picture
- Once your child is familiar with the vocabulary of the symbols, they can be encouraged to build a sentence about the main picture without needing the symbol cards to support them.
- This is tricky and they may need you to step it down by giving them a choice of vocabulary symbols again.

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What?

'What?'

 the cake	 the box	 the sand castle	 What?
 the shoes	 the porridge	 the television	

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'What?' (object) Activities

- Ask your child to fill in the missing 'what?' word in everyday activities, e.g. Daddy is eating _____.
- Talk about your child's favourite TV show and ask them to build a sentence about the characters, including 'who?' 'what doing?' and 'to what?' e.g. Peppa Pig is climbing a tree.
- Encourage your child to draw a picture of something they did today and build a sentence including 'who?' 'what doing?' and 'to what?'
- Take photos of different people doing different actions and build sentences about who you can see and what they are doing.

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Who?

What doing?

What?

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Who?

What doing?

What?

The boy

Is reading

a book

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'What' (animal)

what?

what?

what?

the dog

is drinking

water

what?

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What like?

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- To describe what something is like we need **adjectives (describing words)**.
- Once children can confidently build a simple sentence, you can begin to **introduce adjectives and increase the complexity of their sentences**.
- **Model lots of adjectives** throughout the day e.g. beautiful, large, yellow etc.
- Adjectives are introduced in the form of a **cloud** around the written word and the associated symbol
- We sometimes use a **sparkly brick** to represent describing words in a sentence
- In commercial resources, purple is sometimes used

What like?

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Top tips

- Use the **hulk visual** to help your child to build a strong sentence
- Use a **puppet** to say the sentence back to support your child to monitor whether a sentence is holey or strong.
- **Remodel the sentence** with emphasis on any missing words and lift up the missing brick to draw your child's attention to these.
- **Use as multi-sensory approach**- model and encourage the child to tap out the sentence parts on your head, hands and knees to help them feel each word.
- **Providing frequent opportunities to practice** is important to maximise progress
- **Have fun with the young person!**

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Sentence Building Visual

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Step-up

When your child can confidently make a who- what doing- what sentence, you can increase the complexity by adding:



Where?



When?



Where?

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Where?

Where?



at the beach



in the park



at the shop



at school



in the castle



at the zoo

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Where?



Where?



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm



at the farm

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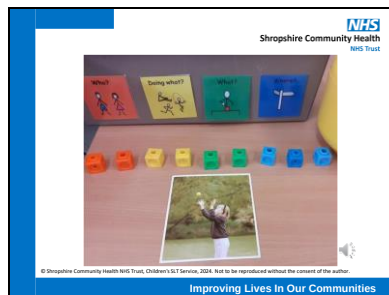


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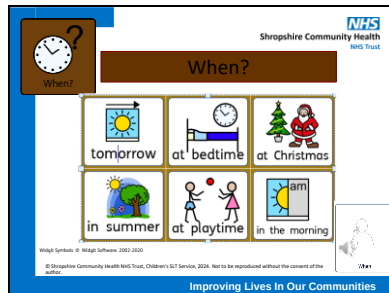
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When?




Location


Who?


What doing?


When?


What?


Where?


When?


Who?


What doing?


What?


Where?

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Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' 'What?'
'Where?' 'When?' sentence


When?


Who?


What doing?


What?


Where?



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Sentence Strip


Who?


What doing?


What?


Where?


When?







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Sentence builder bags



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Where next?



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To Who?



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- When we use certain verbs ('what doing' words), we can add the 'to who' component of a sentence.
- There are only a few verbs that have a 'to who' element e.g. 'to give'
- You can use the 'who' pictures at this stage, but using a different colour and question cue card. 'To who' is coded in pink
e.g. 'The boy is giving the cake to the girl'
- Initially omit 'where' until 'to who' is secure, then you can add the location e.g. 'in the park' etc.



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Why? How?

- 'Why?' is linked with the colour purple
- You can introduce 'why?' following a simple sentence e.g. 'the girl is eating the sandwich BECAUSE she is hungry'
- Children will need lots of examples before being able to think of their own 'why?' answers
- We can link 'How?' to the colour black and its question card
- Start with a simple sentence e.g. 'the mum is chopping the vegetables with the knife'
- Sentence length can then be increased by adding information about 'where', 'when', and even 'to who'

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How can you use the approach to support written language skills?

- There is lots of evidence around the link between spoken language and subsequent written language development.
- The approach can also be easily adapted to also support the development of a child's written language skills.
- It helps children at an early stage of writing transfer their spoken language to writing.

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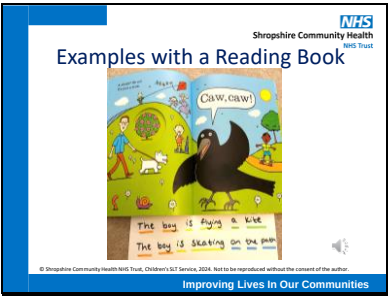
Suggested Activities

- 1) Using the sentence strip children can build their own sentence and write it out OR underline each sentence component with the corresponding colour.
- 2) Ask the child to draw a picture, and then create and write down their own spoken sentence (use the sentence strip if needed).
- 3) Silly sentence worksheets give children a choice for each sentence component and ask them to create their own spoken silly sentence and write it out.

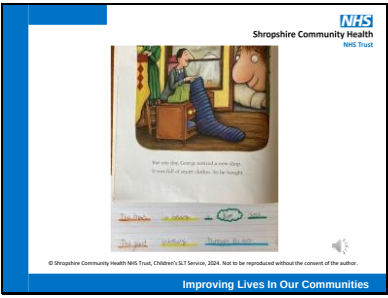
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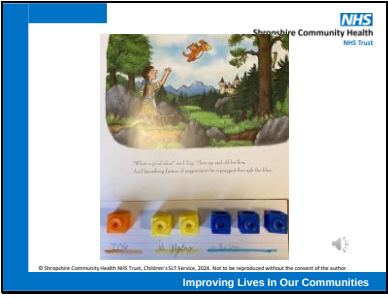
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Who

doing

what

Where

When

(what) + (same)

why?

how

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Makaton Signs for question words

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Workshop Aims- Have we met them?

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• To have an understanding of what components make up a sentence

• To have an understanding of what the Colourful Semantics approach is.

• To know how to use Colourful Semantics to support a child's understanding of 'wh' questions, and the development of their spoken sentence structure and vocabulary.

• To have an awareness of how Colourful Semantics can be used to support written language skills.

• To feel confident in using the Colourful Semantics approach with your child

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Speech, language and libraries

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Our library services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin provide amazing support for children's development.

We recommend the services they offer, for more information about your local library, follow the links below:

www.telford.gov.uk/info/20406/find_a_library

www.telford.gov.uk/info/20412/children_and_young_people

www.shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/find-a-library/

www.shropshire.gov.uk/libraries/groups-and-support/children-and-young-people/

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Feedback



Please use the QR code above to complete the feedback questionnaire to help us to continue to improve the quality of our presentations

Thank you

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The End

Go to our website and Facebook for more help and advice:

www.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk/childrenspeechlanguage/therapy

www.facebook.com/ShropcomSLT

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- Widgit Symbols, *Widgit Software, 2000-2021.*
- Alison Byran. *Colourful Semantics: thematic role therapy.* In Chiat, S., Law, J. and Marshall, J. (Eds) *Language Disorders in Children and Adults: Psycholinguistic approaches to therapy.* London: Whurr. 1997.

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