

Vocabulary Naturally—Ideas to Combat Summer Learning Loss

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We can all celebrate the creative and innovative work of teachers, parents, grandparents, caretakers and others in keeping our kids engaged and learning during the most challenging school year in recent history. But just as we breathe a sigh of relief, we are reminded of the need to protect and extend our students' learning gains until school starts back up in the fall. So what can we suggest for parent or caregivers that can be done over the summer with vocabulary that is both powerful and easy?

We know that children with strong language skills and a sizable vocabulary are better prepared to do well in school.

Children with strong language skills also have an increased ability to learn to read and to have higher levels of academic

achievement in early grades and beyond. Adult interactions with

children have a powerful influence on children's development and learning. The more frequent the interactions, the more language children hear. The more language they hear, the more words are added to their vocabularies.

Our book, *Vocabulary Naturally: Raising Word Wizards!* (LMCG/Amazon/Kindle, 2021) shares teacher and parent ideas for low -pressure, high-yield ways to help young learners develop their vocabularies in pleasurable, every day interactions. It reflects what research and practice tells us about how children develop their vocabularies—they are **engaged, focused on meaning, and surrounded by language.**



Let's look at one typical example of a family activity ripe for learning —going to the grocery store.



Going to the grocery store

Shopping is an everyday activity that parents often do with children in tow making it a firsthand opportunity for learning vocabulary that will be used for life. Our example, going to the **grocery** store is a familiar activity for families everywhere. While it differs by culture, venue, and locale, the givens are making a list, finding your products, paying and bagging, carrying home to put away. It's also a fascinating outing for children with some very tasty payoffs. First, keep your talk easy and natural before shopping., commenting on what you are doing and elaborating with questions and explanations.

Commenting: (Before shopping) *Oh, we need **groceries** for dinner. What shall we eat tonight?* (During shopping) *Now which **aisle** has the **ice cream**?* (After shopping) *Where do we keep the **ice cream**? Right, the freezer.*

Elaborating: *Let's go down the **vegetable** aisle. Look at all these **vegetables**! They are so colorful. Here are the **carrots**. Do you see the **broccoli**? Can you tell which is **cabbage** and which is **lettuce**? Which ones do you want for dinner?*

LANGUAGE IN ACTION: WHAT YOU CAN TRY

1. Start at home. List making is one of the first things that children try when beginning to read and write, so the word “list” is an important one. Even if you usually use your phone for this, try and make a list on paper so your child can hear your narration and watch you write. Let your child use crayon and paper to “write” their own lists of a few things or make a picture list. Take a pencil or crayon so as you shop, so you can check off items on your list or let older children do this for you.
2. As you navigate the store, try to seat your children high enough so they can see the products as you select and name them. Name the general areas of the store—e.g., **fruits, meat, dairy**—as you shop in those categories.
3. Let them see and touch the items and look at pictures on cans and boxes. Narrate. *“Remember that **melon** you liked. I think that’s called a **watermelon**. What color was it?”*



FOLLOW-UP FOR PARENTS

As you unbag, choose some categories for them to help you sort as you put away. *Can you find all the **cans** for me? Can you find the **vegetables** for the veggie bin? Do we have **frozen** food?*

Use coupon flyers and in-store flyers to pick items you want your child to watch for as you cruise the aisles. Play a version of *I Spy* to see which they can find and name.

Extra Fun: Play grocery store with your child using real food or pretend. You can save cans, boxes, and bags for play.

FOLLOW-UP FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS, CARETAKERS AND HOMESCHOOLERS

For home schooling, have children make a photo grocery list by cutting and pasting pictures from old magazines. For more sophisticated children, have them organize their list first into categories.

Try a scavenger hunt where children have a picture or written list to watch for. Some good ideas are at <https://www.bohemianvegankitchen.com/how-to-homeschool-at-the-grocery-store/>

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Fiction

<i>To Market, to Market</i>	Nikki McClure
<i>Max Explains Everything: Grocery Store Expert</i>	Stacy McAnulty
<i>At the Supermarket</i>	Anne Rockwell

Nonfiction

<i>What Happens at a Supermarket</i>	Amy Hutchings
<i>A Trip to the Grocery Store</i>	Josie Keogh

OTHER MEDIA

- Picture dictionary of the supermarket

<https://kidspicturedictionary.com/english-through-pictures/place-english-through-pictures/supermarket/>

- You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSBSFT-nDY8>

<https://schoolhoureviewcrew.com/homeschooling-at-the-grocery-store/>



Some Common Vocabulary for Grocery Shopping

Make your own alphabet chart by adding to or changing

A aisle apple	B bag bakery box banana bread	C cart check out carrot can carton	D dairy	E
F fruit frozen	G groceries	H	I ice cream	J juice
K	L list lettuce	M meats milk	N	O orange
P pay	Q	R register	S store	T
U	V vegetables	W water	X	Y yogurt
Z				

This is just one example of how easy it is to use every-day activities to develop children's vocabulary naturally and have fun while doing it. If you need more ideas to share with parents, or for your own family, loved ones and friends, (or an excellent 'new baby' present), take a look at our book, ***Vocabulary Naturally: Raising Word Wizards!***

<https://www.amazon.com/Vocabulary-Naturally-Raising-Word-Wizards-ebook/dp/B08XN1BNQD/>

Happy summer!

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