



Ways to Teach Opposites

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Why Teach Opposites?

Opposites are pairs of words that have *different* meanings (e.g., big/little, fast/slow, happy/sad). These words are part of *Basic Concepts*. Basic concepts are building blocks that children need in order to follow directions, engage in classroom routines, and provide descriptions. Understanding these concepts is important so that children can be successful with listening, speaking, reading, writing, and math. Basic concept words occur every day in classroom instruction and communication with others. A good knowledge of these concepts is directly related to academic achievement.

Learning and comprehending basic concepts word pairs of opposites allows children to gain new vocabulary as well. For example, when a child comprehends the opposite word pair of hot/cold, he/she can then expand his/her vocabulary with words such as warm/cool. Therefore, when a student understands and uses opposites, he/she is better prepared to function in educational and social settings.



Ways to Teach Opposites

Teach the concept pairs. Present the opposites in *related pairs*. Do this by using pictures, magnets, or real objects that represent the concepts. Teach the meaning of each word and how the two opposite words are related by concept—for example, *in/out* (space), *early/late* (time), *wet/dry* (condition), *happy/sad* (emotion). With success, increase the difficulty by having the child name the opposite of a presented word with no visual(s)... *open/_____ (closed)*.

Teach the concepts with a foil. To increase the difficulty level, give students an opposite pair of words with a *third picture/word (a foil)*. The *foil* is a word that has a meaning in between the opposite words. Have students identify the opposite pairs and related foil. For example, practice the concepts of *top/bottom* with the foil word *middle*. They can also provide definitions for each of the words for further clarification and understanding. For an additional activity, give students a *foil* and have them name the opposite words that go with it.

Activities with Opposites

Use the following activities with your students to help them learn opposites in fun ways!

- Cut out pictures from magazines or other books that show opposites (e.g., big window/small window, big dog/small dog).
- Provide students with a concept word and have them go around the room and identify the opposite word (e.g., heavy/light, on/off).
- Have students tell/write a silly story using as many opposites as possible.
- Use "Opposites" cards with games such as *Go Fish* and *Memory Match* to find the opposite word pairs. The "Opposites" cards can be words, pictures, or a combination of words and pictures.
- Play *I Spy* with students. Say, "I spy something that is **old**." Students respond by naming the opposite... "I spy something **new**." To increase difficulty, have students name as many items as possible.
- Give students a box/basket and have them collect objects that are opposites. Have them name the pairs of opposites and describe their differences.



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[Item #MAG-222](#)

Basic Concepts MagneFoam™ Magnets – Level 2
[Item #MAG-333](#)

Opposites Fun Deck®
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[Item #SAS-22](#)

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