

Colourful Semantics



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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

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.

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’

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'

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



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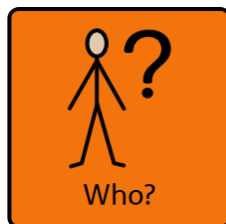
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What is Colourful Semantics?

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)

- 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

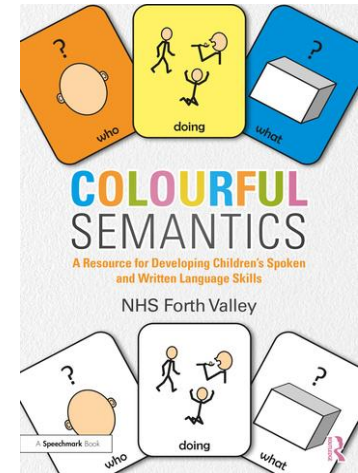
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Recommended Resources

- ***Colourful Semantics- A resource for Developing Children’s Spoken and Written Language Skills.***

NHS Forth Valley (2020).



- ***In Print 3*** www.Widigt.com

Design personalised symbol materials to print



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Colour Coding System

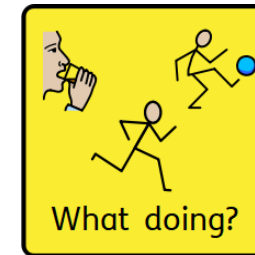
Who?	Orange
What doing?	Yellow
What?	Green
Where?	Blue
When?	Brown
To who?	Pink
Why?	Purple
How?	Black

(Alison Byran, 1997)

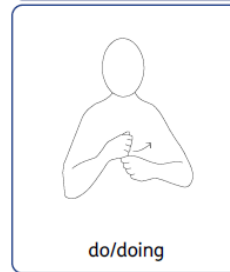
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Key

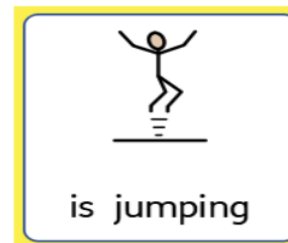
- Visual question cue cards e.g.



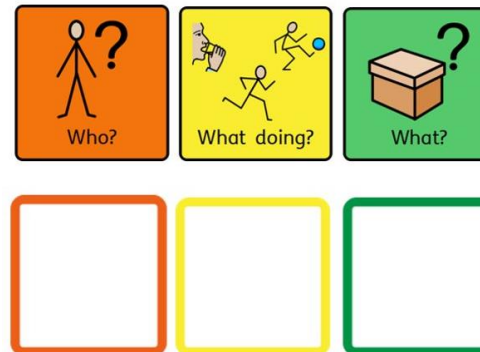
- Makaton sign



- Symbol cards e.g.



- Sentence strip e.g.





What doing?

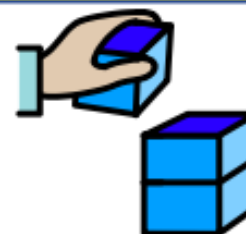
'What doing?' (verb)



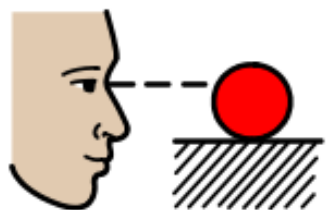
is stirring



is eating



is building



is watching



is carrying



is wearing



do/doing

'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?

Who? (subject)



the witch



the policeman



the girl



Tiddler



the dragon



the man



Who

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

Start by.....

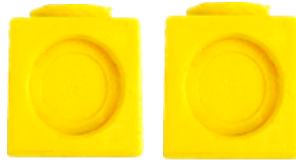
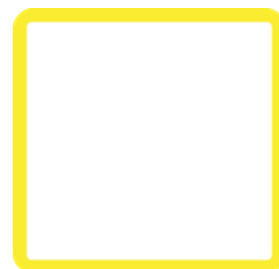
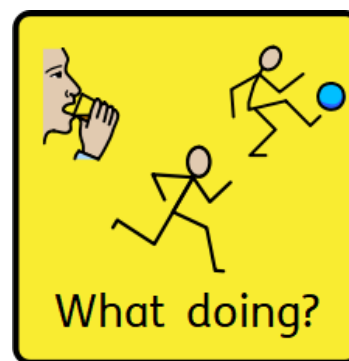
Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' sentence (1)

- 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

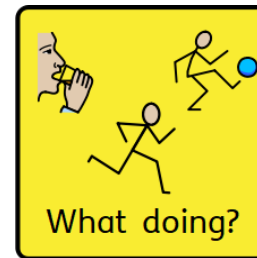


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Who?



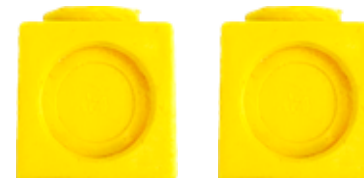
What do they do?



the girl



is jumping



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.

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

- The child can be shown a main picture to build the sentence about.
- Give the symbol 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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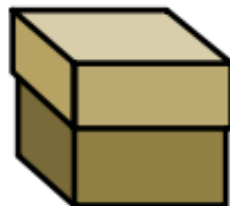


What?

'What?'



the cake



the box



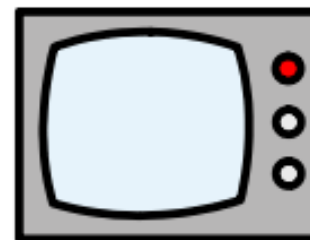
the sand castle



the shoes



the porridge



the television



What

'What?' (object) Activities

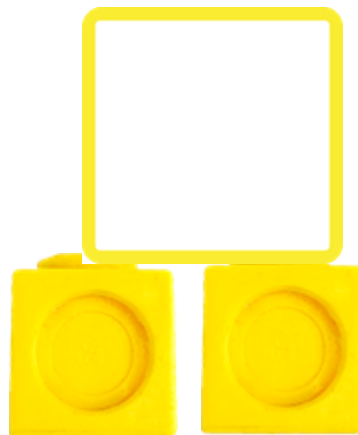
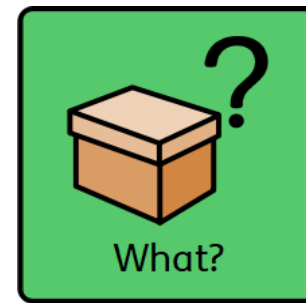
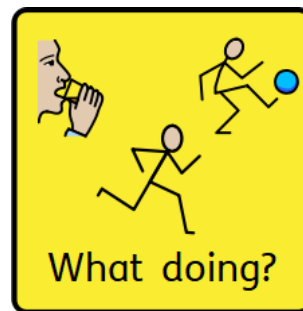
- Ask your child to fill in the missing 'what?' word in everyday activities, e.g. Daddy is eating _____.
- Talk about your child's favourite TV show and ask them to build a sentence about the characters, including 'who?' 'what doing?' and 'to what?' e.g. Peppa Pig is climbing a tree.
- Encourage your 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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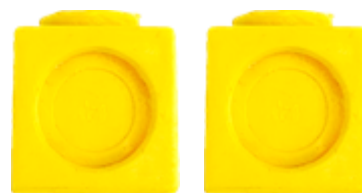
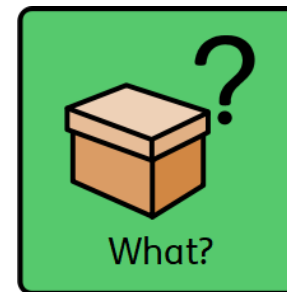
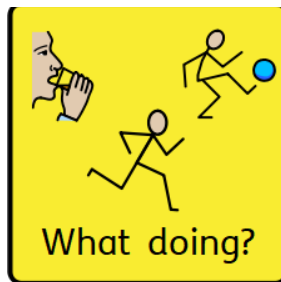
Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' 'What?'

sentence



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'What' (animal)



what ?

What doing?

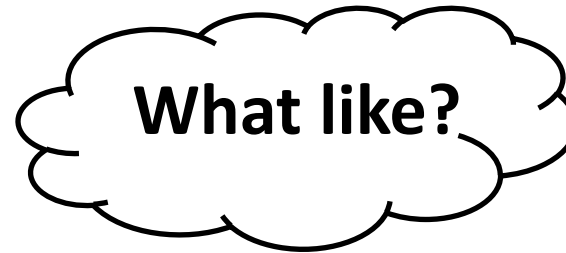
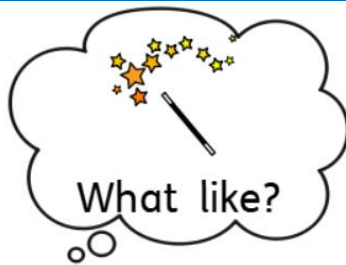
What?

the dog

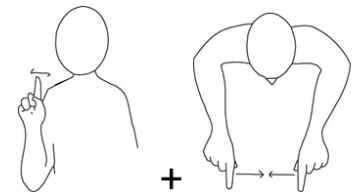
is drinking

water





- 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)

(same)

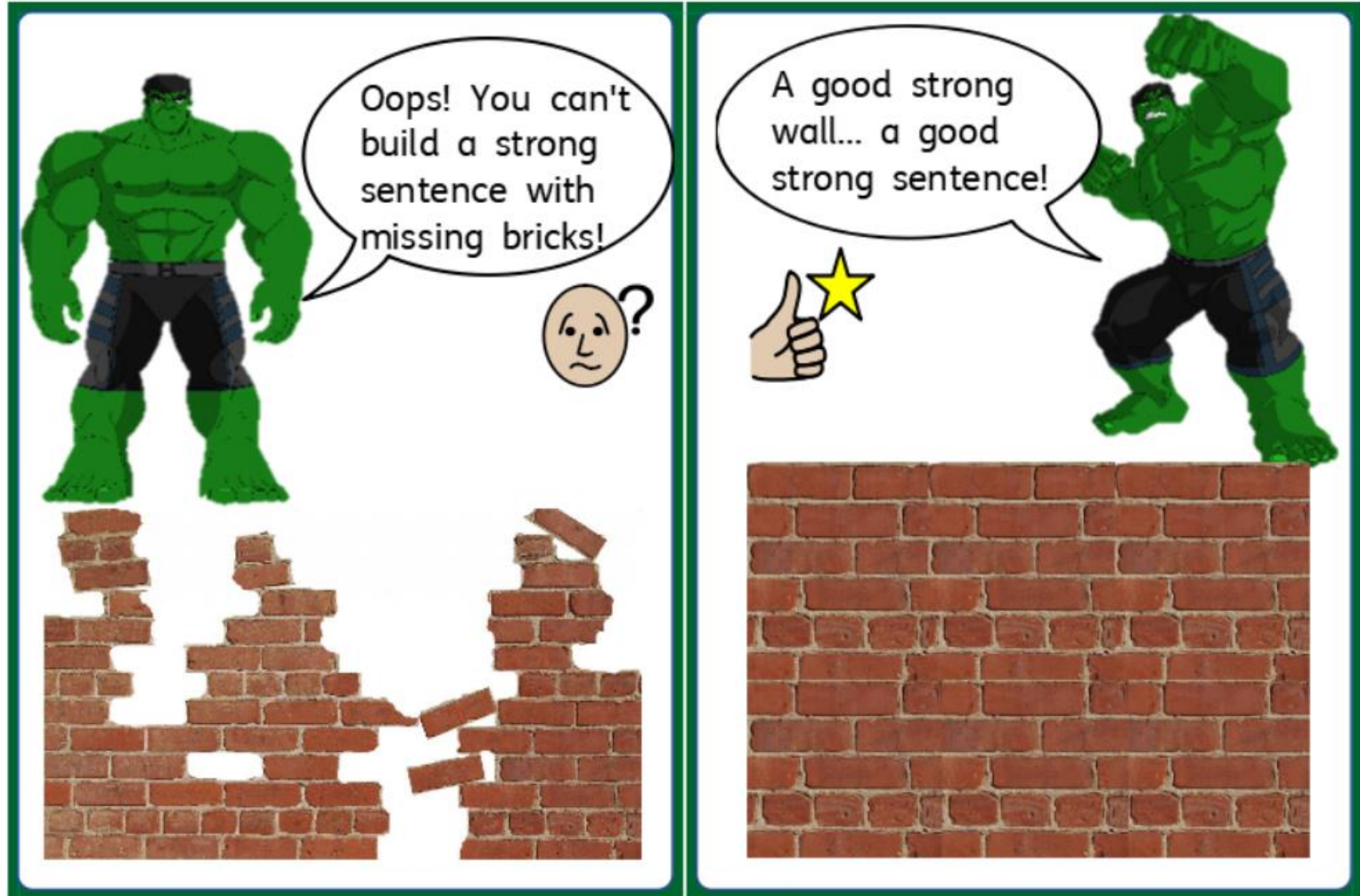
Top tips

- 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:



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Where?

Where?



at the beach



in the park



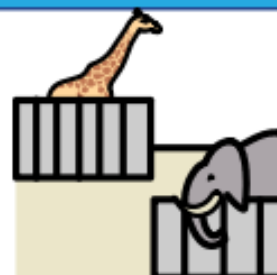
at the shop



at school



in the castle



at the zoo



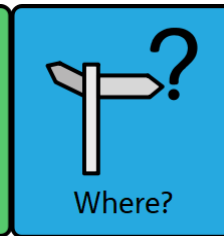
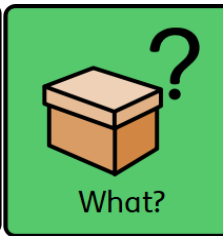
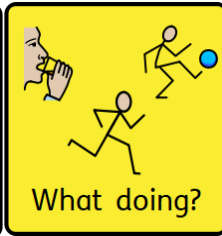
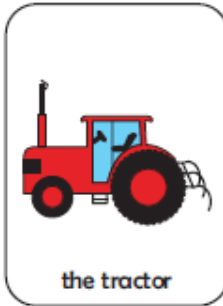
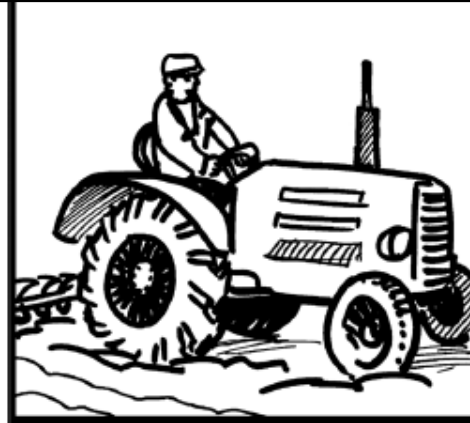
Where



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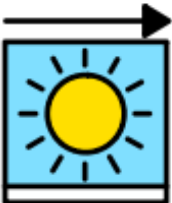
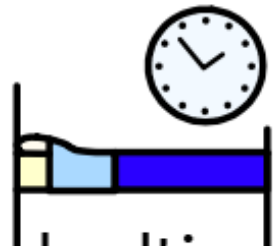




Where?

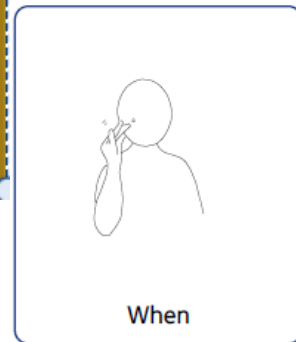






When?

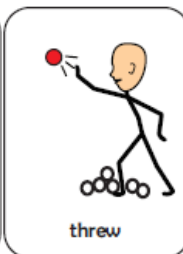
 <p>tomorrow</p>	 <p>at bedtime</p>	 <p>at Christmas</p>
 <p>in summer</p>	 <p>at playtime</p>	 <p>in the morning</p>



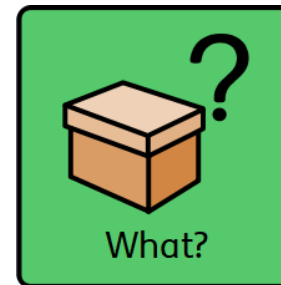
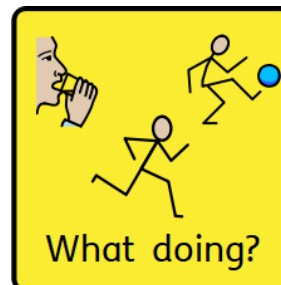
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When?



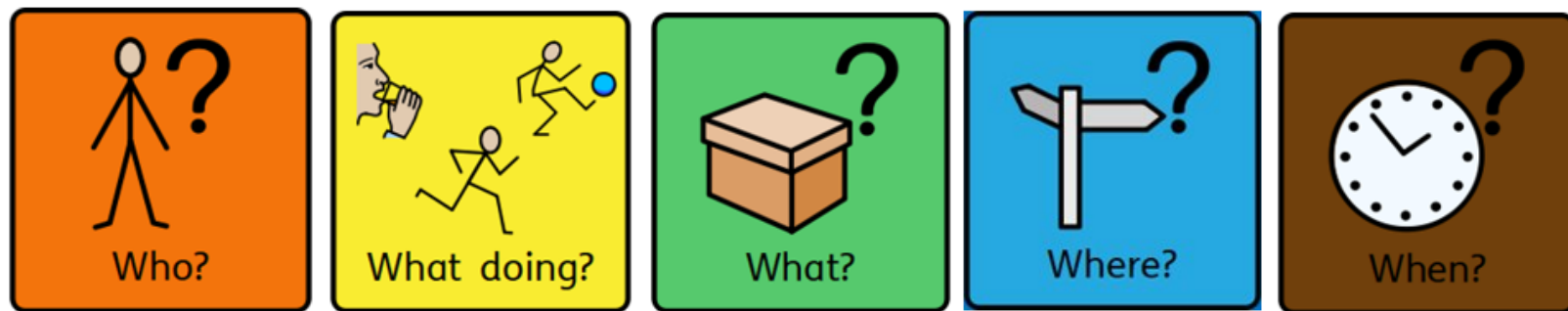
Building a 'Who?' 'What doing?' 'What?' 'Where?' 'When?' sentence



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Sentence Strip



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Sentence builder bags



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Where next?





To Who?

- 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.



Why?



How?

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'**

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.

Suggested Activities

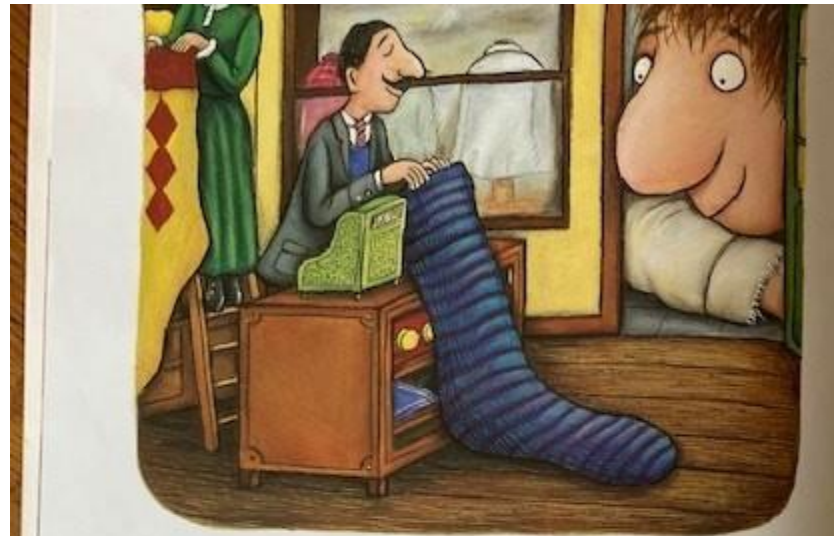
- 1) Using the **sentence strip** children can build their own sentence and **write** it out OR **underline each sentence component** with the **corresponding colour**.
- 2) Ask the child to **draw a picture**, and then **create** and **write down** their own spoken sentence (use the sentence strip if 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.

Examples with a Reading Book



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But one day, George noticed a new shop.
It was full of smart clothes. So he bought . . .

The man is holding a big sock.

The giant is looking through the door.

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"What a good idea!" said Zog. Then up and off he flew,
And breathing fumes of peppermint he zigzagged through the blue.



Activity



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Workshop Aims-

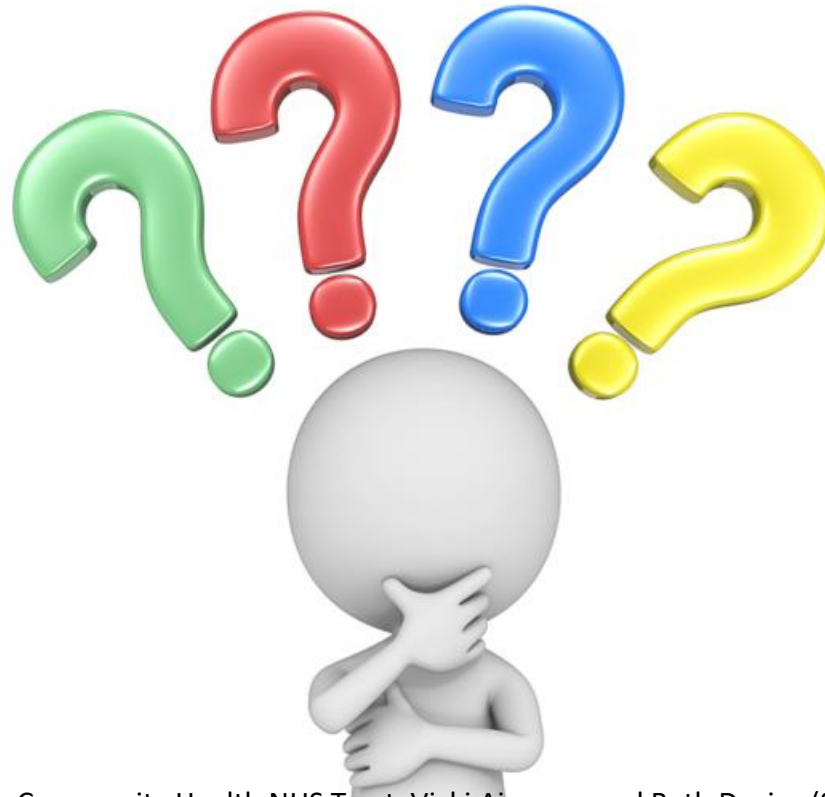
Have we met them?

- 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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Any questions?



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Thank you

The End

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References:

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