

Ideas for Teaching Language Skills to young children—kitchen vocabulary
(can be adapted to almost any vocabulary)

1. Sing “Do As I’m Doing”

Do as I’m doing, follow, follow me;
Do as I’m doing, follow, follow me.
I am chopping, chop, chop, chop;
I am chopping, chop, chop, chop.
Do as I’m doing, follow, follow me.

--for other verses:

I am cutting, cut, cut, cut
I am stirring, stir, stir, stir
I am beating, beat, beat, beat
I am kneading, knead, knead, knead
I am measuring, measure, measure, measure
I am sifting, sift, sift, sift
I am cooking, cook, cook, cook
I am rolling out, roll, roll, roll
I am pouring, pour, pour, pour
I am grating, grate, grate, grate
I am peeling, peel, peel, peel . . .

Explain: stirring is slow; beating is fast (vigorous/energetic);
chopping makes small pieces, cutting makes larger pieces.

2. Draw a pretend stove-top for each child. Use real or pretend pots, spoons, and bowls:

“Think aloud” as you demonstrate pretend cooking, and invite the children to follow your lead.
(a clever person could sing to the tune of “Here we go Looby-Loo . . . I put my right hand in . . .”)

I put my pot on the stove. You put your pots on your stoves.
I turn on the burner. You turn on your burners.
I stir my pot of [soup, sauce, gravy, candy, or whatever . . .], You stir your pots of
I watch my pot so it won’t get too hot and boil over. [Show a drawing of a pot boiling over]
When my _____ is done, I turn off the burner. You turn off your burners.
I take my pot off the heat/burner. You take your pots off the heat/burner.
I serve some _____ to _____, and _____, and . . . [use the names of the children].

3. Hide and Seek ideas:

- a. Use a coloring page of a kitchen. Have the children color different objects different colors, such as,
“color the pot green . . . Color the oven black . . . color the bowl red . . .
- b. Use real, or toys, or pictures of kitchen accoutrements to hide for the children to find—such as,
“Who can find the pot?” “Where is the apron?” . . .
- Or, see who can find the most (don’t make it too hard for their abilities to find), then count and classify them as dishes, cookware, utensils, linens, etc.
- c. Or, “Look for the pot on the stove.” “Look for the milk and eggs in the refrigerator.” “Look in the freezer for the ice cream.” Look in the oven for the cookie pan/sheet”. “Look in the sink for the cup.” . . . “Look for the plate in the upper/top cupboard.”
- d. Or, have the children look for and circle the different kitchen things on a picture. (Readers could label, or draw a line from the label to the object, or paste the label on the page and draw a line . . .)

4. Kitchen math and science:
 - a. Cut open various fruits and vegetables to show how they look inside (use the terms inside and outside to contrast and compare)
 - b. Measure how much water various containers can hold.
 - c. Combine oil and vinegar. Shake it, then watch it separate.
 - d. Look at a raw egg, then watch as the clear part turns white when it cooks. Float a raw egg, then a boiled egg in plain water, and salt water. Whip up the egg whites (You may make meringue cookies or macaroons).
 - e. Show a picture of various animals we eat, and use the food terms for them, such as we get beef from cows (cattle or bovine animals); ham, bacon, sausage, pork all come from pigs/hogs . . . chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, quails are poultry—maybe not quails, which may be called game birds . . . venison comes from deer, and other game animal meat may be too extensive for this age child).
 - f. Make gelatin, and observe how it changes (Jello jigglers, or in muffin pans). Freeze and boil water (make steam) to see how water changes. Watch how cooking and baking change batter. Compare wet and dry cloths and ingredients.
 - g. Practice cutting things (such as bananas) in half, fourths, etc. discuss whether all the pieces need to be the same size. Note that the more people you share with the smaller the pieces, and a fourth of a piece is smaller than a half.

5. Make vocabulary cards:

(pictures can be gathered from ads, labels, catalogues and magazines, clipart, etc.)

 - a. Food cards can be used in a multitude of ways:
 - Put them in alphabetical order
 - Put them in piles by color or shape (or size, if possible)
 - Classify them in food groups:
 - breads, grains, cereals
 - fruits (even by melons, berries, citrus, greens . . .)
 - vegetables
 - milk, cheese, yogurt (dairy)
 - meat, poultry, fish, seafood, nuts, dry beans/ (legumes), eggs (proteins)
 - combinations—soup, salad, sandwich . . .
 - other: fats, oils, sweets/sugars, salt, water, nutrients (vitamins), medicine
 - Classify them in plant vs animal products
 - classify them as plant parts: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds
 - kinds of plant: tree, bush, vine . . .
 - animal types
 - zones of growing/eating/origins (tropical, desert . . .)
 - b. kitchen accoutrements cards can be used:
 - play hide and seek (cards hidden according to children's ability to search and find); children can take turns with 1-2 being the hidiers and the others the seekers
 - classify bake/cookware, dishes, utensils, linens, aprons & hotpads, etc.
 - if two of each card is made, children can play Concentration, or a form of Go Fish
 - flash card type games can be played—if shouting out answers is too loud, hands must be raised and the answers whispered (if the child follows the rules, he may keep the card—the one who collects the most wins the game). Also, children can take turns answering as teams, or quizzing each other

6. Real or play foods and pots/pans/dishes can be organized by size, shape, color, using terms such as small, medium, large; and small, smaller, smallest (also big and little); arrange from smallest to largest and vice versa

7. Literature connections:
 - a. Nursery Rhymes, such as Old Mother Hubbard; Hey, Diddle, Diddle; Pease Porridge Hot, Peter Pumpkin-Eater, Jack Sprat, The Queen of Hearts, Little Jack Horner, Little Tommy Tucker, Sing a Song of Sixpence . . . (have pictures to show)
 - b. Folk & Fairy Tales (simplified), such as, Little Red Hen, Three Bears, Gingerbread Man, Hansel and Gretel . . .
—Let the children draw pictures for a few parts of the story, then sequence them.
 - c. Simple non-fiction, such as where our food comes from
—let the children respond to the text with drawing, telling about their favorites, sequencing, etc.

8. Bingo or Tic Tac Toe (use pictures on the playing boards)
 - a. pots and pans Bingo
 - b. foods Bingo
 - c. cooking verbs Bingo (stir, bake, measure, pour, cut or chop, peel, . . .)
 - d. kitchen appliances etc.—oven/stove, sink, refrigerator/freezer, cupboards, counters, tables, chairs . . .

9. Make simple recipes, letting the children help with measuring, adding, stirring . . . Have them work as teams to measure and add (one holds the measuring cup, the other pours in the ingredient). Be sure that they realize that you are working from a recipe, so that it will turn out right (even if it's in your head)—such as:
 - a. cookies, pancakes, play-dough (salt dough or an edible dough), fry bread, bar cookies/brownies
(if the children help stir up a batch of bread, it can be baked for them to see the next day, or, if the dough is pre-made, they can just cut it out and watch it bake)
 - b. color eggs
 - c. no-bake, no-cook recipes

10. Simon Says . . . (no need to try to trick young children, just let everybody do whatever actions)
 - a. kitchen verbs—including clean-up, such as sweeping, mopping, wiping . . .
 - b. vocabulary—such as, “Simon says put the pot on the stove. Simon says put the glass in the cupboard . . . (can either be going through the pretend motions, or really acting out the instructions)
 - c. food or Bingo cards—such as, “Simon says find something orange, or round, or long, or crunchy, or that starts with “c”, or a vegetable, or . . .

An alternate is “Silent Simon Says”, wherein the children just follow the actions of the leader

11. “This is the Way We . . .” (tune of Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush)

Now we begin to clean the kitchen, clean the kitchen, clean the kitchen
Now we begin to clean the kitchen, so it will be nice and tidy:

This is the way we clear the table . . .
So the kitchen will be clean and tidy.

This is the way we stack the dishes . . .
This is the way we wash the dishes . . .
This is the way we dry the dishes . . .
This is the way we put things away . . .
This is the way we wipe the table/counter/stove/frig . . .
This is the way we sweep the floor . . .
This is the way we mop the floor . . .

This is the way we rest and read . . .
For now the kitchen is tidy. (or, all cleaned up)

12. With the children in a circle, play “I have . . .”, or “I don’t have”, or “I need . . .”, or “I want . . .”, or “I need . . .”, or “I like . . . (some kind of food)”, “I don’t like . . .” (teacher models the sentences)
- deal out objects or picture cards to everyone in the circle
 - Each person in turn says, “I have . . . (whatever he has)”
 - Each person in turn says, “He/she/you have . . .”, then similarly, “You and I have . . .”, “We have . . .,” and “They have . . .”
 - Each person in turn says, “I don’t have . . .” etc., as above
 - Each person in turn says, “I want . . .” or “I need . . .” something they wish they had from another
 - Similarly, each person says what he doesn’t want or need.
 - Each person in turn tells a food he likes, then a food he doesn’t like

Note—these don’t all have to be played at once, but can be done at separate times.

13. Play “Mannerly Mother May I”
- Begin with a large bowl or tray full of foods, play foods, or food cards in the center
 - Each person in turn can say, “I’m hungry/thirsty. Mother, may I eat/drink . . . (whatever the child wishes)?”
Mother gives permission for small bites, big bites, half, whole, sharing, . . .
 - If the child follows instructions, he may keep whatever food he has chosen. If not, he must surrender it to Mother
 - When all the foods in the center are gone, the child who has been most mannerly (has collected the most play food, or food cards) wins.
 - Optional: at the end of game, children say, “I feel full. Mother, may I be excused?” or “May I leave the table?”
14. Play “The Cook is in the Kitchen”, to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”
- Have each child pin a picture of a kitchen item on his front
 - One starts out in the center as the cook.
 - The rest of the children hold hands and go around the cook in a circle, while they sing the song.
 - The cook chooses an item from the kitchen (outer circle), which in turn chooses another item, until all are in the center of the circle.

The cook is in the kitchen, the cook is in the kitchen,
 What will cook fix to eat, while she/he is in the kitchen?
 The cook takes the . . . [whatever the cook wants to take from the circling children] . . .
 The cook takes the . . .
 What will cook fix to eat, while she/he is in the kitchen?
 The _____ takes the _____.
 The _____ takes the _____.
 What will cook fix to eat, while she/he is in the kitchen?
 [continue]

15. Read and make “Stone Soup” (or alphabet or vegetable soup (using canned vegetables to save time)

16. Glue foods or food pictures onto a food pyramid or balanced-diet plate.

17. Order a balanced plate, options:

- Choose a picture from each food group pile to glue on your plate.
- Order from a (pictured) food group menu what to glue onto your plate.
(prep: divide a piece of paper in quarters. Glue pictures of each food group into a quarter.
Fold as for a menu)

18. Play store:

- use a box, piano bench, TV table, or whatever as checkout counter
- use a silverware tray (or make something similar from a paper size box) for cash register to sort bills
- use food from pantry & frig to buy/sell, or toys, or empty cans/boxes/containers
- make price labels as easy as pieces of paper taped on
- include approximate weights of items, so children can get used to estimating weights
- use play money, Monopoly money, or just cut green paper into 8 parts to make your own money