

Compound Words – Tips for Helpers

Difficulty:

- There are 3 different versions of each puzzle. I would typically start with the version labeled “A” at the bottom (Ex: “sun” + “glasses” = _____) These versions are slightly trickier, because there is less information available.
- However, if it’s too difficult, switch to version “B” with all 3 pictures (“sun” + “glasses” = “sunglasses”).
- The last version, level “C” at the bottom (matching pictures from Box A to Box B) is the hardest. I would save this for people who are at a very high level, or perhaps as a sort of “quiz” after completing one of the easier versions.

General Tips:

- Allow the person with aphasia to do as much as they can by themselves! Try to stay quiet, be patient, and help only as needed.
- If they seem tired, or keep getting stuck on a previous answer, take a break. They might just need a little time. You can also come back to it another day. This is normal. Don’t push too much. You want this to be enjoyable.
- Provide encouragement and gently give corrections if needed (assuming the person wants you to). See #2 below... Provide hints, not answers!

1) Writing/Spelling

- Have the person write, even if it’s very difficult! This is part of language, and we want to build as many connections (both spoken and written words) as possible.
- If they have a weaker, stroke-affected hand, try using dry erase markers on a dry erase board. The markers are thicker, easier to grip, and don’t require as fine of motor movements to write. Pencil grips can also sometimes be helpful.
- Another option is that they can write with their non-dominant hand, which will be tricky at first, but like any skill – gets better with practice.
- If spelling is too hard, use Bananagrams tiles or Scrabble tiles. As the helper, you will choose the appropriate letters in the word, scramble them up, put them on the table. Have the person rearrange the letter tiles to spell each word.
- If all of that is still too difficult, write the word, have them study it for a minute or two, cover it up, then have them try to re-write the word from memory.
- Gently provide corrections. “Oh nice! Really close, you just have to swap these two letters.” However, if their answer is way off, don’t tell them they’re close. Say something like, “Hmm, I’m not sure what word your brain is thinking of, but it’s going to start with this letter.” (Then you can either write the first letter, or show them the correct Bananagrams tile.)

2) Provide Hints – Not Answers!

- You can describe the item (physical characteristics, color, where you typically find it, what it’s used for), you can give the very first sound of the word, or you

can start a sentence, with a fill-in-the-blank. If all else fails, say the word, but then be sure to have them repeat it!

- For example, if the person is looking at the picture of the angel, and says, “person,” I might say, “Yes, it does look like a person. But what about this here? I see a halo. And wings. So instead of a person, we might say it’s an...”
 - If they still don’t get it, I might try another hint, “We think of this person as being in heaven. They have a halo, and wings. They not the devil, they’re an...” (Sometimes providing an opposite can be a helpful contrast.)
 - If we’re still not getting anywhere, I might write the letter “A” with four blanks after it: “A_ _ _ _.” Sometimes a written cue can help.
 - You could also make the first sound of the word. It’s an a...”
 - If none of those hints have worked, say, “It’s an angel. Now you say it. What is it?” (Wait for them to repeat.)
- One exception to “not giving answers” is that I do tell someone if they get one of the words right. For example, on “keyboard” if they said, “key... wood?” I would tell them, “Key is correct. Go ahead and write that down... okay, now let’s look at the other picture. It *is* wood, but it’s long and flat, so we have a different word for it.”
 - Then, they might say plank, “Oh nice! Plank is a good word. But that won’t fit the puzzle. It’s something similar... can you think of another word?”
 - Again, you can give a written cue “B_ _ _ _” or tell them the first sound of the word, “If you go to Home Depot, you might buy a long, wooden b...”

3) Practice

- If it was hard the first time, print out another page, and do it again. Or maybe come back to it in a week or two. Our brains need lots of repetition.

4) Reading

- Have the person read the words aloud – especially if reading is a goal!
- Again, help them as needed. Just because you talked about it once, doesn’t mean that it has solidified in their brains. Be patient and give the same hints as before. It may be just as difficult the second time, or the third time. That’s why practice is so important!

5) Comprehension

- As the helper, you can (mentally) choose one of the words on the page – don’t point! Say the word out loud and have the person point to the appropriate picture. This works on their auditory comprehension.
- If you say one of the short words, “glasses” and they point to the longer word, “sunglasses,” you might help by telling them “You’re on the right track, but I said one of the shorter words. The word was just... glasses. Which one is glasses?”

Thank You!

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