



Colourful Semantics

Colourful semantics is a way of teaching children about the different parts of sentences and how to use them using colour coding. Each part of a sentence is given a different colour. e.g., **who** the sentence is about is orange and **what they are doing** is yellow.

The suggested colours used in this resource pack are shown in the table below. These colours also relate to the Narrative Therapy resources from Blacksheep Press so if children progress to using those, they will recognise the same colours for the question words:

Question	Colour
Who?	Orange
What doing?	Yellow
What? (what are they using?)	Pink
Where?	Red
What like? (description)	Purple
When?	Green

Getting Started

Initially you need to establish that the child can understand and answer the questions “**who is it?**” and “**what are they doing?**”.

Some children may find this difficult because they don’t understand the questions words. Other children may find it hard to answer because they don’t have a wide range of vocabulary so are limited by who they can name and what action words they can use.

Begin by using the base cards for who (orange) and what doing (yellow). Introduce some of the picture cue cards and see if the child can match them to the baseboards based on the colour of the cue cards. As you do this encourage the child to name the characters and the action words. Also remember to ask the questions “**who is it?**” and “**what are they doing?**” so that the child starts to relate these questions to the colours. Continue with sorting and naming games until you are confident the child has a good understanding of the who and what questions, is able to answer who and what questions and also has a good range of vocabulary to name people and actions.



Next Steps

Now you are ready to start building sentences. Arrange the base boards so they go in the colour sequence orange then yellow and put out a small selection of the orange and yellow cue cards with pictures on. Say short sentences which contain the words on the cards you have out and see if the child can find the correct cue cards and make the sentence by placing them on the base boards. E.g.

The man is running

The policeman is eating

The teacher is reading

When the child is confident doing this swap the game around so they are the teacher and have to tell you the sentence. Encourage them to check that you have the correct cue cards for the sentence they said. Sometimes you might want to make a deliberate mistake so that you can make sure they are understanding and remembering their sentence when they check if you got the right pictures. Encourage them to tell you if you got it right or wrong. Seeing adults sometimes get things wrong helps build confidence as the child sees it is ok to make a mistake occasionally. Also, they will learn how to correct errors themselves by watching an adult do it.

Alternative Games

When the child is confident building and saying short sentences containing **who** and **what doing** see if they can start to think of their own sentences without the picture cue cards. Give them both the base cards – orange and yellow – and one picture cue card. E.g. doctor. Now ask them to think of what the doctor might be doing. How many **what doing** words can they think of and in a sentence? E.g.

The doctor is climbing

The doctor is sleeping

The doctor is falling

You could swap around the cue cards so sometimes they have to think of different **who** words. E.g.

The fireman is swimming

The chef is swimming

The plumber is swimming

You could also add a dice or number spinner into the game so they have to think of a certain number of words depending on what they roll or spin.



Adding more question words

When the child is confident using **who** and **what doing**. You can gradually start to add the other base cards and cue cards into the sentences, one colour at a time, to make them longer. Continue to use the types of activities described above as you introduce each new colour.

Some examples of longer sentences are given in the table below to show how the sentences will build as you add in additional colours.

Orange	Yellow	Purple	Pink	Red	Green
The teacher	is reading				
The teacher	is reading		a book		
The teacher	is reading	a big	book		
The teacher	is reading	a big	book	in the kitchen	
The teacher	was reading	a big	book	in the kitchen	last night

You can also think about swapping around the order of the base boards so that you create different sentences structures. E.g.

Last night the teacher was in the kitchen reading a big book (green, orange, red, yellow, purple, pink)

The teacher was reading a big book in the kitchen last night (orange, yellow, purple, pink, red, green)

Last night the teacher was in the warm kitchen reading a book (green, orange, purple, red, yellow, pink)

Describing pictures

When the child is familiar with the colours and is using sentences using the cue cards start to introduce pictures from books or Blacksheep Press resources. Ask the child to talk about the pictures and use the coloured base cards and point to them as they describe. This way you can remind them of any information they miss and help them to extend their sentences. Gradually reduce the use of the cue cards until they can describe the pictures themselves.