

Colourful Semantics

What is Colourful Semantics?

Colourful Semantics is an intervention approach created by Alison Bryan (Speech Pathologist) to support spoken and written language learning. This approach teaches children the components of a sentence by giving each one a colour and an associated question prompt.

Benefits of Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics supports children to:

- Understand the individual meaning of words and their role in a sentence
- Understand how word order affects meaning
- Expand their vocabulary and use a range of word structures including nouns, verbs, adjectives and prepositions
- Organise words into sentences/use grammatical sentence structure
- Increase the length and complexity of their sentences
- Understand and respond to WH questions with a sufficient amount of information
- Develop a concept of narrative (the components of a 'story')

Colour-Coded Symbols



Also referred to as the 'subject'



Also referred to as the 'verb'



Also referred to as the 'object'



Also referred to as the 'location'

Types of Sentences

1. Subject + Verb / Verb + Object

Example: The boy is kicking / Kicking the ball

2. Subject + Verb + Object

Example: The boy is kicking the ball

3. Subject + Verb + Object + Location

Example: The boy is kicking the ball outside

Once the child can build sentences with the above elements, introduce additional colour-coded symbols and new question prompts e.g. What like? How like? When? To whom?

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Colourful Semantics Activity Ideas

- Sentence building: Place an action picture next to the Colourful Semantics sentence strip. Present the child with individual picture cards for each element of the sentence e.g. Subject- “the boy,” “the girl”, verb- “painting,” “carrying,” object- “a ball,” “a book.”



- Support the child to describe what is happening in the picture by asking WH questions e.g. “Who is in the picture?” “What are they doing?” Have the child place the corresponding picture card on the Colourful Semantics sentence strip. Ask the child to verbalise the sentence in entirety. If the child omits grammatical items such as “the,” “is,” and “a,” recast the sentence back to the child with these word structures included.



- Spoken Language: Play Simon Says and have the child instruct you. Have the child use the target sentence structure e.g., Subject + Verb + Object= “Mummy kick the ball!”
- Prompt the child to retell a personal event. Ensure the colour-coded symbols are accessible during retell tasks. Support the child to share more information by asking additional WH questions.
- Reading comprehension: Select a short story. Ask WH questions throughout the story with reference to the colour-coded symbols e.g. “Who is playing?” “What is she playing with?” If the child responds by pointing to the picture, model the correct response e.g., “Yes, the girl is playing.”
- Write a sentence and have the child underline/highlight the subject, verb, object etc. Use colours that align with the Colourful Semantics therapy approach.
- Written expression: Write a short sentence for the child. Support the child to make the sentence more ‘colourful’ by adding the missing information e.g., object and location.