

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

Colourful Semantics

Colourful Semantics is a therapy approach which can be used to help develop a child's use of language. It aims to improve the length and structure of a child's utterances using colour coding for sentences.

When producing spoken sentences, the verb (doing word) is vital as this states the action which is taking place. However a sentence can not contain only a verb e.g. "kicking" as this is not complete. It needs other parts alongside the verb including somebody to do the action and something for the action to be done to. Additional information can be added to sentences to provide more detail and make better sentences, but this is not essential.

e.g. The boy is jumping on the bed.

Yesterday, the cat killed the mouse.

Colourful Semantics should only be used with children as recommended by a Speech and Language Therapist.

How it works -

A colour coding system is used for each part of a sentence as follows:

- Orange = Who? E.g. the baby is crying
- Yellow = What doing? E.g. The cat is sleeping
- Green = What? E.g. the man is eating a cake
- Blue = Where? E.g. the girl is playing in the garden
- Purple = What like? E.g. the tall man is walking.
- Brown = When? E.g. The dog drinks water in the morning

The colour coding and questions are used with children to teach them the roles that different parts of the sentence play and to encourage them to use these different parts of sentences in order to improve their sentence structure in both their spoken and written language.

Not all parts of the sentence are introduced straight away, and a colourful semantics therapy programme will be built up and developed over time as recommended by the Speech and Language Therapist. A sentence should always include a verb (doing/action word) and the most complex sentences can include all of the above.

How to do Colourful Semantics

Ensure that the child understands the question terms “who” and “what” before starting.

Stage 1 -

- Choose a prompt picture and give the child the 2 part sentence strip (orange and yellow).
- Provide them with a choice of 2 symbols for each section.
- Work through each colour by asking -
 - “who is in the picture” (orange)
 - “what are they doing” (yellow)
- Ask the child to choose the correct symbol to answer each question and put it in the allocated space. Once all symbols are in place, help the child to read out the sentence remembering to point to each picture. E.g. “the girl is eating a sandwich” “the boy is riding a bike”.

Stage 2 -

- A child should not move onto stage 2 unless they have been assessed by the Speech and Language Therapist to be able to consistently achieve stage 1.
- This stage follows the same steps as above but will require the 3 part sentence strip (orange, yellow, green)
- Work through each colour by asking -
 - “who is in the picture” (orange)
 - “what are they doing” (yellow)
 - “what’s this” (green)
- Ask the child to choose the correct symbol to answer each question and put it in the allocated space. Once all symbols are in place, help the child to read out the sentence remembering to point to each picture. E.g. “the girl is eating a sandwich” “the boy is riding a bike”.

Stage 3 -

- A child should not move onto stage 3 unless they have been assessed by the Speech and Language Therapist to be able to consistently achieve stage 2.
- This stage is about the child adding more detail to the sentences e.g. describing the person who is doing the action (purple); saying where they are doing the action (blue) and saying when the action is taking place (brown).

The Speech and Language Therapist will provide the necessary resources to complete this therapy.