**Speech & Language Therapy Advice for**

**Word Finding Difficulties**

The term ‘word-finding difficulties’ (or WFDs) can be used to describe a range of subtly different difficulties. You might relate to some of these descriptions:

**“I just can’t find the words”**

**“I mix-up my words”**

**“I’m no good at remembering names”**

**“I just can’t get the words out”**

**“I sometimes use the wrong words”**

**“I jumble-up my words”**

WFDs can be part of a primary language disorder, for example following a stroke or head injury.

Sometimes WFDs can arise as the result of more generalised changes, not specific to language areas of the brain, for example in dementia.

WFDs may present in a number of different ways:

* You may find it **difficult to respond** at all
* There may be **hesitations** in your speech
* You may notice a **reduction in your vocabulary**
* You may have difficulty with more **precise shades of meaning**
* You might make **errors**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Word you want to say = “pear”C:\Users\tweede\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\CBD6GANW\Pear-PNG-Pic[1].png | |
| **What you say:** | **Type of error:** |
| “apple” | Similar meaning |
| “tear” | Sounds similar |
| “saggel” | Made-up word |
| “thingy” or “fruit” | Generalisation |
| “you know, it’s something you eat...not an apple....grows in trees...” | Circumlocution |

**Therapy**

Your therapist might recommend exercises to get you thinking more about **word meaning:**

* **Matching** words to pictures
* Matching words or pictures to **related words or pictures**
* Thinking about words that have **same** or **opposite** meaning
* Answering **Yes/ No questions**
* Thinking about the **category** a word belongs to
* Thinking about the **function** or use of a word
* Thinking about the **properties** or features of a word

Or exercises with a focus on the **sounds within words**:

* **Repetition** of sounds and words
* **Reading aloud**
* Using the **first sound** or sounds to help name a picture
* Thinking about **rhyming words**
* Listening for **sound-differences** in words

**Your therapist will also encourage:**

Compensatory **strategies** **Self-cueing** Use of '**total communication**' skills

**Strategies for word-finding difficulties**

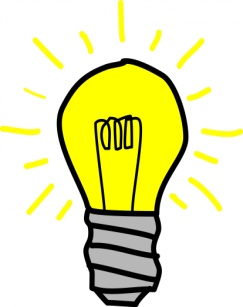
**A close up of a clock

Description automatically generatedReduce any distractions, such as background noise.** Switch off the TV; turn down the radio.

**Take your time**

With a little extra time, the word may pop out on its own.

Give an extra second of two. Be patient with yourself and ask others to allow you time.

**Describe**

Give your listener some clues:

* What does it look like?
* What is it used for/ what can it do?
* What parts/ bits does it have?
* Where would you find it?

Any extra information might help them to guess what you are talking about. It might also help to activate the word you were looking for in the first place.

**Association**

Icon

Description automatically generatedA picture containing brush, blue

Description automatically generatedWhat does it make you think of or what goes with it? Even if it is not quite right, look for something related. This might be enough to get your meaning across, or might help to activate the target word.



**Synonyms**

Think of a word that means the same or something similar.

**First letter**

Can you think of the first letter of the word? Run through the alphabet to check if each letter triggers anything for you.

**Act it out**

You might be able to use your hands, body, or facial expression to help get your meaning across. A bit like a game of charades.

A person wearing a bow tie

Description automatically generated

**Draw**

Logo

Description automatically generatedYou don’t have to be an accomplished artist to have a go at a quick doodle to sketch to help with what you are trying to say.

**Look it up**

Is there something or somewhere you can refer to to find the word written down or pictured (e.g. in a book, photo album, on a food packet, a poster etc.)

**A picture containing box

Description automatically generatedMap

Description automatically generated A can of soda

Description automatically generated**

**Narrow it down**

What sort of thing is it? Introducing the general topic or category might help your listener predict what you are trying to say by providing some context.

**Come back later**

A person in a suit and tie

Description automatically generatedIf you can’t think of the word, and your listener can’t guess, it is okay to give up for now. It can be tiring and frustrating to run through all of these other strategies, and you are less likely to find the word when you are tired and frustrated. If it is important you can come back to the conversation after a rest.