

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS!

**By Barbara Pheloung, Move to Learn October 2008
Credit to Sister Yvonne Mary 30 years ago.**

Are your pupils good at following instructions?

Nearly all of those who have learning difficulties have also got poor body awareness. Not only does this make mathematics difficult for them but also they are invariably poor at actually understanding what their teachers want them to do. They are blamed for 'not trying' for 'poor concentration' and for 'not caring about learning' and most often for 'laziness.' It's either just too difficult for them to concentrate, so they 'daydream' looking out the window, or they don't actually understand what the spatial words mean such as in, outside, beside etc

To help you know how much your class or your friend understands give them a cup and a block and ask them to follow your directions. "Put the cup upside down over the block", "Put the cup over the block right side up" etc .

To improve body awareness, and thus help in understanding a teacher's instructions, do the following games with your student/s. There are a certain number of words which are to do with the space which is around people and their understanding of their relationship to that space. For instance, to understand the word 'over' it is necessary to know where your own body is first before you can know what it is like to have something over or under you. These words indicate a spatial relationship to you so you must first learn your own position and size. This can be done quickly and effectively by some play acting as follows. And always there is the magic of **movement**.

UNDER

Your instruction to the class: “Crawl **under** a chair.”

Students wonder: “Where is **under**? My **underwear**?”

Problem Solved:

1. Ask the whole class to crawl **under** their desks;
2. put their legs **under** their desks;
3. put their feet **under** the water in a pail.
4. This student is **underweight**. (Have 1 or 2 students say whether they are under the desired weight for their height or not.)
5. Is her **underwear** a white colour? (Discuss why it is called underwear.)

BESIDE

Instruction: “Sit **beside** Peter!”

Student wonders: “Where is **beside**?”

Problem solved:

1. Ask class to touch their sides.
2. Explain that **beside** means ‘be at the side of.’
3. Ask the class to touch a shoe which is beside the carpet;
4. put their head **beside** their friend’s head;
5. put their shoe on the floor beside your desk;
6. sit **beside** a student with black hair.

INSIDE

Instruction: “Stand **inside** out of the rain.”

Student wonders: “How do you stand in a side?”

Problem solved:

1. Ask the class to put their pen **inside** their case;
2. put their finger **inside** their mouth;
3. write a sentence on a page **inside** their exercise book;
4. stay **inside** the classroom.

OUTSIDE

Instruction: "Go **outside**."

Student wonders: "How do I go out of a side?"

Problem solved:

1. Go outdoors, which is **outside** the walls of a classroom;
2. stand **outside** the carpet piece on the floor;
3. walk around **outside** of the carpet;
4. put all pens **outside** of a cup;
5. jump **outside** of the room."

ASIDE

Instruction: "Stand **aside** and let the others pass by."

Students are puzzled: "How can I stand on someone's side?"

Problem fixed:

1. Have the students march along following one another in a line. The first one stops and stands **aside** and then goes to the end of the line;
2. the second one in turn does the same, and so on.
3. Tell the student to, "Move **aside** those two cups on the table";
4. "Stand **aside** so that Mary and Jane have room to throw the ball."

EDGE

Instruction: "Go to the **edge** of the square."

Student: "Where's the **edge**?"

Problem solved:

1. Have the students feel around the **edge** of their body;
2. go to the **edge** of the balcony;
3. skip around the **edge** of the grass;
4. walk backwards to the **edge** of the sidewalk.

TO

Instruction: “Go **to** the canteen.”

Student: “Are there two canteens?”

Problem solved:

1. Ask students to go **to** their desks;
2. follow with your eyes **to** the right;
3. bring a spoon **to** the mouth;
4. stick out their tongue **to** the right.

FRONT

Instruction: “Feel the **front** of your body – stomach, face, chest and the front of your legs saying **front** every time you move your hands.”

Students: “Where does she mean? I will look at the others and copy.”

Solved:

1. Tell the student to come from the **back** of the line and walk to the **front** of the line, so that they are first in line;
2. put their **back** against the white board;
3. walk to the **front** to the carpet;
4. jump to the **front** of the room with both feet.

OVER

Instruction: “Jump **over** the log.”

Student puzzled: “How high is **over** – **overhead**?”

Problem solved:

1. Tell the student to put their hands **over** their head;
2. walk **over** the floor;
3. leap **over** the fence;
4. put their foot in the pail of water **over** their ankle.

CIRCLE

Instruction: "Make a **circle** by joining hands with one another."

Students reaction: "How can you draw a **circle** by joining hands?"

Problem solved:

1. Tell the student to make a **circle** with their index finger and thumb;
2. make a circle with their body as they lie on the floor;
3. make a **circle** with other students following the leader going in a **circle**.

CENTRE

Instruction: "Stand in the **centre** of the circle."

Confused student: "Where is the centre, I will watch the others to find out."

Solved:

1. Tell the students to lie on the floor one at a time and trace around them with chalk. Then tell them to sit up and place a belly button on their traced body. They learn that that is where the **centre** of their body is.
2. Tell the student to walk to the **centre** of the carpet square;
3. walk to the **centre** of the room;
4. point to someone else's **belly button**.

BETWEEN

Instruction: "Sit **between** John and Jo."

Student; "Where is between?"

Solved:

1. Ask a student to sit **between** a girl and a boy;
1. walk **between** two lines of students;
2. write a sentence **between** two lines;
3. walk **between** six pillows on the floor;
4. put the plate **between** the two boys."

There are other words that need this same body awareness to be understood. As follows:

EVERYWHERE, NOWHERE, APART, NEXT, THROUGH,
FROM, EQUAL, TOGETHER, STRAIGHT, BOTTOM, TOP,
BEHIND, FORWARD, BACKWARDS, SIDEWAYS, BOTH.
There will be others that can be added to this list.