



Word Finding

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Word finding is when someone has difficulty expressing a desired word



Spoken communication depends on many cognitive processes (e.g., plan of message, word retrieval, grammar). Disruption in any of these areas can affect word finding.

- Types of word finding errors may be described as problems related to:
 - Finding words
 - Remembering names
 - Getting words out
 - Using the wrong words
 - Mixing up words
 - Having a reduced vocabulary

Effects of Difficulty with Word Finding

It is normal for word finding skills to fluctuate

- Word finding errors occur more frequently in individuals with dementia than in typical aging

- Potential effects of difficulty with word finding skills may result in:
 - Fatigue
 - Anxiety
 - Mood disorders
 - Social isolation

Findings Words

Tips and Strategies

1. Delay

Sometimes we just need to give it a second or two.

“Do you have any... um... oh... one sec... any scissors?”

2. Describe

We can describe what the word or thing looks like or does.

“Do you have any... oh dear, those things that cut? Scissors!”

3. Association – find a similar word

We can think of something related. Even if it's not quite right, it may prompt the word or convey the meaning.

“Do you have any... ah my... they're not knives, but like that?”

“Do you have any...clippers?”

4. First Letter

We can try to write or think of the first letter of the word. Scan the alphabet to see if each letter triggers anything for you.

“Do you have any... (traces an S in the air)... scissors?”

Findings Words

Tips and Strategies

1. **Gesture**

We can use our hands or body to act out the word, like playing a game of charades.

“Do you have any... (makes cutting gesture with fingers)?”

2. **Draw**

We can sketch out a quick picture of what we’re trying to say.

“Do you have any... (draws scissors on a notepad)?”

3. **Look it Up**

We can think if there’s somewhere the word is written down or pictured. A communication notebook, the Contacts app in our phone, or a ticket stub in our pocket may hold the word.

“Do you have any... (points to scissors in a picture dictionary)?”

4. **Narrow it Down**

We can give the general topic or category. Is it a person, place, or thing? A family member or a friend?

“Do you have any...oh...they’re office supplies.”

5. **Come Back Later**

If we can’t think of the word and our partner can’t guess, it’s okay to try again later.

“Do you have any... [tries every other strategy]... oh, never mind... I’ll ask you later.”

Word Finding and Memory

- Distinction between “word finding” and “memory” difficulties
 - Different neuroanatomy and cognitive mechanisms involved within these processes
 - Overlapping qualities
 - Individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias experience more frequent word-finding and memory difficulties
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- Both word finding and memory difficulties can be early signs of Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias.
 - **However**, word finding difficulties do not *necessarily* predict Alzheimer’s disease.



Building up our Word-Finding Muscles!

Tips and Strategies

- Read every day to retain and increase our vocabulary
- Try to mentally link names and faces
- Use a friend's name while speaking to them
- Connect someone's name to someone else with the same name who is memorable (famous or close to you)
- Name objects as you walk around or throughout your day
- Crossword puzzles!
- List things out as you complete a task