# Positional Words: Helping Your Child Use 'In', 'On' and 'Under' Correctly

## Key points

- Reception children learn positional words like 'in', 'on' and 'under' to describe where things are, building on the language they use in maths.
- Young children often mix up these words because they're thinking about the position while also remembering a new word, which takes practice.
- You'll hear these words used in everyday life—'put the toy in the box', 'sit on the chair'—and children learn them best through play and conversation.
- There's no rush: learning positional vocabulary now supports the listening and speaking skills that develop into reading and writing in Year 1.
- Repeating the same short activities with toys and household objects helps the words stick without any pressure or drilling.

## Things to try at home

- Play a simple hiding game: put a toy in a box, on a shelf or under a blanket, and ask your child to tell you or show you where it is, using the same words each time.
- During tidying up, use positional words naturally: 'Can you put the blocks in the bag?' or 'Place the teddy on the bed.'
- Read picture books together and point out where characters or objects are: 'Look, the cat is under the table.' Let your child answer questions about where things are.
- Make a positional picture: cut out pictures from old magazines or draw simple scenes, and ask your child to stick them in, on or under lines or shapes on paper.
- Create toy scenes with cars or figurines—a figure in a box, on a bridge, under a tree—and talk about what you're making together.

## Find out more

- Your child's school: their Reception teacher can show you what words they're practising and suggest activities for home.
- Department for Education: the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage sets out what children learn in Reception.
- GOV.UK: search for 'early years foundation stage' to find guidance on supporting your child's learning.