Action Words: Understanding Verbs in Year 1

Key points

- Verbs are words that describe what someone or something is doing or being.
- Common Year 1 verbs include simple actions like running, jumping, sleeping, eating and thinking.
- A helpful way to spot a verb is to ask: 'Can I do this with my body?' – if yes, it's likely a verb.
- Children learn verbs after learning about nouns (naming words) and adjectives (describing words).
- Understanding verbs now helps children learn about tenses and sentence building in Year 2 and beyond.

Things to try at home

- Action game: name a verb and do the action together – hop, clap, spin, sleep, think – no right or wrong way.
- Spot the verbs: during everyday activities like cooking or getting dressed, ask 'What are we doing?' to name the verbs.
- Story walks: look through a picture book together and talk about what the characters are doing.
- Song actions: use nursery rhymes or songs you both know and act out the verbs as you sing.
- Copy game: you mime an action silently and your child guesses the word, then swap roles.

Find out more

- Ask your child's teacher about verbs and grammar work in Year 1.
- National Curriculum English for Key Stage 1 (Department for Education, GOV.UK).
- Education Makes Sense: resources on grammar and word types for Year 1.