

Tools for Instruction

Make Connections to Words

Making meaning is an active process. Students build understanding of new words and incorporate them into their vocabulary by connecting the words to their own experiences and schemas about the world. Help students identify real-life connections to words and explore how they can be used in different contexts at school, at home, and in the larger world.

Step by Step 30–40 minutes

1 Introduce making connections to words.

- Choose a word that your students have recently learned or read in a book. Display the word in a sentence and read the sentence aloud. For example:

The bear stepped in the squishy mud.

- Talk with students about the word *squishy*. Then ask partners to discuss the following questions:

- What does the word squishy mean?
- What else is squishy?
- What isn't squishy?
- How might you use the word squishy at home, at school, or anyplace else?

- Ask volunteers to share some of their answers with the larger group.
- Point out that this word is not just used in books; it can also refer to things at school, at home, and in the world.

2 Model making and recording connections to words.

- Display the **Connections to Words** (page 3) graphic organizer.
- Say, *Let's record our connections to the word squishy*. Then model where to write the word *squishy* in the graphic organizer.
- Say, *This summer, I made squishy water balloons*. Model how to write and illustrate the word *squishy* in the section of the graphic organizer labeled *At Home*.
- Ask volunteers to share examples of something squishy at home, something squishy at school, and something squishy in the world. Model how to fill out each section of the graphic organizer with words and illustrations that represent the connections students describe.

Word	At Home
squishy	water balloons
At School	In the World
clay	marshmallows

3 Guide practice in making connections to words.

- Display this sentence and read it aloud.

The frozen lake looked smooth and shiny.

- Ask partners to discuss the following questions:

- *What does the word smooth mean? What does it feel like?*
- *What is smooth at school?*
- *What is smooth at home?*
- *What is smooth in the world?*

- Ask volunteers to share their responses. If necessary, help them clarify the meaning of the word *smooth*.

4 Provide practice recording connections to words.

- Pass out copies of the **Connections to Words** (page 3) graphic organizer and ask students to write the word *smooth* in the first section.
- Ask students to use the examples they shared with their partners to fill out the *At Home*, *At School*, and *In the World* sections of the graphic organizer.

5 Partners share their connections.

- Ask partners to tell each other about the words they wrote or illustrated in the graphic organizer.
- Have them use the target word in sentences as they talk to each other. (*I found a rock that was very smooth.*)
- Ask volunteers to share their ideas, graphic organizers, and sentences with the larger group.

Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty connecting the word to different contexts	<p>asking students to describe specific contexts and objects. Ask questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is in the classroom?</i> • <i>What does it look like? What does it feel like?</i> • <i>Is there something like it at home, at school, or in the world?</i> <p>(There are smooth, glass windows at school, at home, and in the world.)</p>

Connections to Words

Name _____

Word	At Home
At School	In the World