



What is embellishment?

Embellishment is the process of adding more detail to a statement or story to make it more interesting. It can be used whenever you are engaging with your child.

For example, let's say you and your child see a dog. You stop and say, "look at the dog!". However, we can make this conversation much bigger and packed full of language by embellishing.

Depending on what your child is looking at, interested in and what the dog is doing you could talk about the following:

- **what the dog looks like**
- **what sound it makes**
- **what dogs like to do**
- **where dogs live**
- **what the dog is doing now**

So instead of saying, "Look there's a dog!" You could say:

"Wow look at the big brown dog." "It has long fluffy hair! Let's see what his hair feels like." "Be gentle when you pat him. Pat pat pat". "Dogs says woof woof. Can you say woof woof?"

How much more has your child learnt about a dog in this example? Your child will eventually learn that the word dog is not just for that particular dog, but that dogs come in different shapes and sizes, run and play differently, as well as feel different and sound different.

For children who are best prepared for grade 1, 46 million words are heard by the age of 4. (Hart, B., & Risely, T.R. (1999))

Embellishment is particularly important for our children who are deaf or hard of hearing as it promotes incidental learning. Did you know that 90% of vocabulary that we learn is from overhearing others! Unfortunately, overhearing is a challenge for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, and hearing over distance and background noise is problematic.

Children with hearing loss require three times the exposure to learn new words and concepts due to the reduced acoustic bandwidth caused by the hearing loss. (Pittman, A. (2008))

We can start to overcome some of these issues and provide children with the repetition of language that typically is learnt through overhearing through embellishment. This direct exposure to language gives children who are deaf or hard of hearing the opportunity to develop language at the same rate as other hearing children.