



CHIL.D. Association Supporting children with primary language and related disorders

Colour Coded Writing

General Information

Colour coded writing is a system for language and reading which can be applied to both the written word and pictorial representations of words.

Colour coded writing provides a mechanism for which children with speech-language and related learning disorders can be supported visually for the grammatical elements of our language system. It supports children's learning by providing visual support for comprehending, analysing, and expressing:

- The parts of speech (ie grammatical elements) of our language; and
- The word order which governs sentence structuring (ie syntax) of our language.

Colour coded writing can be used at both simple and complex levels of language.

Procedure and Application

The following colour code is an example for colouring or underlining words:

- **Red** = proper names (eg Harry); nouns (eg ball); pronouns (eg his); and yes / no
- **Yellow** = verbs (eg swimming)
- **Green** = adjectives (eg blue ball; soft ball)
- **Blue** = prepositions (eg beside); adverbs for place (eg from)
- **Pink** = articles (eg a, an, the); and other determiners (eg that _____, my _____)
- **Brown** = adverbs for time (eg quickly); adverbs for manner (eg happily)
- **Purple** = conjunctions (eg and, because, until).

Use coloured pens and pencils to write words in their appropriate colours, or underline words in their corresponding colours. Note that proper names will have a double red underline to signify their formality.

Words, usually only nouns and verbs, may also have two or more colours able to be attributed to them, depending on their meaning in context eg:

- The girl **saw** the bird. [**saw** is coloured **yellow** signifying it as a verb]
- The girl bought a **saw**. [**saw** is coloured **red** signifying it as a noun].

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Activities and Use in the Classroom

The following are some suggested uses for using coloured coded writing within the classroom.

- ◆ teach students the parts of speech by introducing the colour coding for example:
 - “Red words are nouns – they talk about a person, place, or thing.” Stick pictures of people, places, and things onto red cardboard.
 - “Yellow words are verbs – yellow words talk about actions.” Stick pictures of people performing actions onto yellow cardboard etc.
- ◆ teach students the grammatical word ordering which governs our language, for example
 - “A pink word will only come before a red word.” (ie *an elephant, the Olympics, that book*);
 - “Blue words need to come before a pink or red word in a sentence.” (ie *The boy is beside the boat.; I am coming from Sydney.*);
 - “A green word helps to describe a red word, and often comes before it in the sentence.” (ie *The big blue bird ate the little yellow insect.*).
 - a conjunction (ie purple word), joins two sentences to make it into one.
- ◆ increase a student’s metalinguistic awareness (ie knowledge and thinking about language) by using colour coding, for example:
 - every sentence must have a yellow word (verb);
 - logical strings of words which do not contain a yellow word are likely to be phrases (eg *over the bridge*);
 - a clause is a string of words containing a yellow word and a red word.
- ◆ increase the student’s ability to manipulate grammatical elements and formulate varying sentence structures, for example, by doing sentence transformations with words appropriately coloured or underlined on cardboard or on correspondingly coloured cardboard. Common word orders used by children are *red-yellow-blue-pink-red* eg *People walk on the footpath.* or *pink-red-yellow-brown* eg *The boy ran quickly.* Encourage the children to use different word orders.
- ◆ increase the student’s ability to use creative language in sentences and stories by indicating he/she must use, for example, several green words, or a brown word in their work.
- ◆ ask students to proof and edit their work by utilising colour coding to assist in identifying disordered sentence structures and when varying their sentence structures.
- ◆ use colour coding to code sight reading words in order to facilitate increased retention. The colour coding will provide a link to the word meaning.

Reference: Lea, J. (1970). The Colour Pattern Scheme. A Method of Remedial Language Teaching. Moor House School, Oxted, United Kingdom.

This information sheet was compiled by: Annette Jacobs, Senior Speech Language Pathologist and is based on programs/strategies utilised at The Glenleighden School