

# Dictionary Treasure Hunt

In first grade, vocabulary moves to center stage. But when a kid gets stumped—and we all feel that way sometimes, even as adults—it’s time to turn to a lifetime resource: the dictionary. Want a fun way to help your child start making friends with this important reference tool? Try this treasure hunt!

## What You Need:

- children’s dictionary
- sticky notes
- pen or pencil

## What You Do:

**Set the stage.** The dictionary is a big book and it can be intimidating, especially for little kids. It’s likely that your child has already started using the dictionary in school, but a refresher never hurts! Start by asking your child to come up with a “big” word and ask her what she thinks it means. Then look it up together, showing her how you move through the book alphabetically until you find the first letter of her word, then the second, and so forth. When you find the entry, look over the definition. Talk about the fact that there are sometimes nuances, or slightly different versions of meaning for a word.

**Plan the hunt.** Getting kids to look up words in the dictionary isn’t always easy. But when there’s a treasure hunt involved? Much more interesting! A dictionary treasure hunt is just like a backyard one, except instead of hiding clues behind bushes or under trees, you’ll hide them throughout the pages of the dictionary itself. If your child has a vocabulary list from class of words she’s supposed to define, you can use it. Otherwise, choose a set of your own words. Start with the first word you’d like your child to look up and write a clue for it on a sticky note. When she gets to that word in the dictionary, there should be another sticky waiting there, with the next clue written on it. And when she gets to that one, another sticky should await. In this way, your child will move through the dictionary, from definition to definition, until she finds the final clue, which should lead her to a small prize, for example, a gift certificate or homemade coupon for an ice cream, a trip to the movies, or whatever else you dream up.

**Get writing!** While your clues will depend heavily on the words you choose, and the definitions listed in your dictionary edition, here are some examples of what clues might look like:

- Find the word “arcane”
- Find a word that starts with the letters RIDI and means “something laughable” (Answer: ridiculous)
- Find a verb that starts with the letters INS that means “to make a demand, request urgently” (Answer: insist)
- Find a word that starts with the letters FLIM and ends with the letter Y, that means “not strong or solid” (Answer: flimsy)

Limit your hunt to between 6-10 clues, you don’t want to force a first grader to slog through past her attention span. And if you’re choosing your own words, try to pick terms your child will find interesting, for example, words that are fun to say like “quagmire” or “rickety”, or words that tie in to your child’s favorite hobby, like “benchwarmer.” True, the dictionary may never become your kid’s favorite book, but it’s a valuable tool. So get out those sticky notes and get her comfortable using it. With the right dictionary etiquette, she’ll learn to maneuver her way through that colossal reference tome in no time!



