



Scavenger Hunt! AKA “Treasure Hunt”

The name here says it all, but let's recap just to be sure we have the details understood. If you have not already taken Course 103: *Understanding What You Hear*, it is recommended that you enroll. The course gives important insight into understanding the language we hear.

In Scavenger Hunt! The adult plays a game where they give verbal clues to find an ultimate prize. The activity can be adjusted up for older children or down for younger ones.

Let's discuss those adjustments. A lot depend on your child and what they will understand as fun. The “finding” of the prize may be more immediate or it may be the ultimate culmination of following a series of clues. You know your child's language level and maturity level. For a child who is not going to persist from clue to clue in the hope of finding an ultimate “treasure”, you will want to deliver a smaller “treasure” with each clue. Or, you could have several shorter hunts with a treasure being discovered after every two or three clues. You know your child and you will be the best at deciding the “treasure” schedule.

Also, there are other related choices you can make. For example, you may want to show your child the “treasure” (e.g., a little bag of treats, a plushy toy, a collectable card like a Pokémon, etc.) before the hunt begins so they are motivated for the thing. Or, you may know that the element of surprise adds to the fun for your child. Again, you will know best and you decide.

The thing to bear in mind:

- Keep it fun! We are learning important information but we do not want our child to feel tested. When apprehension goes up ~ performance goes down.
- Start with language clues you know are easily do-able by your child. We want to start with success and build gradually.
- Begin and end with success! When your child starts to experience uncertainty or gives you any indication that understanding the spoken clue is becoming challenging; be sure you reduce your next clue to more simple language where your child will be successful.
- When verbally delivering these clues or while your child is attempting to follow the spoken clues, be careful to not give nonverbal indicators like:
 - Looking or orienting in the direction the clue would lead
 - Pointing
 - Giving expected clues or using location that your son or daughter would already anticipate regardless of what you said
 - Giving nonverbal confirmation through facial expressions to your child while they are looking for the prize and intermittently looking back to you hoping to gain feedback as to whether or not they are getting closer!

Withholding nonverbal support is a very temporary thing. Remember, the point of our withholding the nonverbal support that normally accompanies talking is so that we get an opportunity to let our child show us what they understand of the language they hear. Once we have that insight, it is important we talk and interact with our child using the full range of communicative support and social referencing that naturally accompanies talking!

Finally, have your clues and hiding places set ahead of time. It is harder to think of verbal clues on the sly than you think! It is also fun to have some unusual hiding spots arrange for your child (e.g., hanging from a tree limb! Taped to the ceiling!).

Here are some examples of setting for the hunt that would accommodate three different levels of language performance and maturity, and likely 3 different ages of children. Things may take a slow start in the beginning when your child is unfamiliar with the game. But once they understand the exercise the enthusiasm should increase, particularly if we are choosing things and settings they enjoy!

Example #1

A single room often works best for children whom you believe to be at the beginnings of understanding language. It allows to begin with single words and then add a word as the child succeeds. So, for example, if you are in the Livingroom, you may give a single-word as a directive, "sofa!". Once the child is at the sofa you can add additional words, "get pillow!". Imagine the fun should your child "get the pillow" and find a "treasure!". It would continue like this, but with a bit more language sophistication each time.

Example #2

You could go to a neighborhood park or play structure (at a time when it is not crowded). In addition to the park presenting various hiding places among the equipment, it is nicely contained, it provides opportunity for varied language, and its fun. There are other contained settings like a park. You could do this same thing in your backyard or with a large play set (e.g., a large dollhouse, a larger play kitchen center, etc.)

Example #3

A house works great! For children whose language understanding is more developed and can handle a longer utterance, house provide numerous options. It doesn't have to be your house. Perhaps it would make it special if a treasure hunt was ready and waiting at the grandparents' home or other close relation or friend. Special can be fun!

Here are some examples of clues for three different levels of language performance and likely 3 different age children. These will dovetail with the setting examples above.

Example #1

"sofa"
"get pillow" {prize!}
"hop to chair"
"now look up" {prize!}
(It can be fun to hang things)
"Look under the rug" {prize!}
"Look under the book on the

Example #2

"Swing!"
"Dig sand"
"under the slide"
"Peek inside the tire"
"Look under the bench"
"Go to the end of the red ramp"

Example #3

"Look in the basket"
"Go to the biggest chair"
"look on top of the lamp"
"Open the third drawer from the top"
"Hop to something soft with three cushions"
"Look behind the middle cushion"