



Up, Down, Top, Bottom! Relative Positions for Preschoolers

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As your child learns the names of the things around them, they will also begin to develop vocabulary to describe the relative position of those objects. This is another communication skill that, as adults, we don't think about at all. We give directions like "Put your homework on top of the kitchen table," and assume that others will know what we are talking about. But your preschooler is still developing a wide range of **vocabulary** and needs to be shown and taught what these positional words refer to.



Words like up, down, top, bottom help give your child a way to connect to the world around them. This vocabulary also allows them to understand the way that objects relate to one another. Positional words also help your child gain more independence. As they learn positional words and phrases you will find that they are better able to follow simple directions and complete small tasks on their own.

Here is a list of relative position words and phrases:

- Inside
- Outside
- Above
- Below
- On top of
- In front of
- Beside

As you and your child explore, model using these words and phrases like “Look at the butterfly! It is below the tree.” You can also play games asking your child to place items like blocks in different positions and then naming the position or asking them to name it.

You can reinforce this skill by reading books that use positional vocabulary. The picture book *Up, Down, All Around* by Katherine Ayres is a great picture book that supports both science topics and relative position. A long time classic, *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins, has illustrations that are perfect for discussing position words. Rosie is on a walk and unaware of the fox following behind her. Use the pictures in these books to prompt your child to use positional words in order to tell you where Rosie or the Fox are.



Illustration from the book *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins

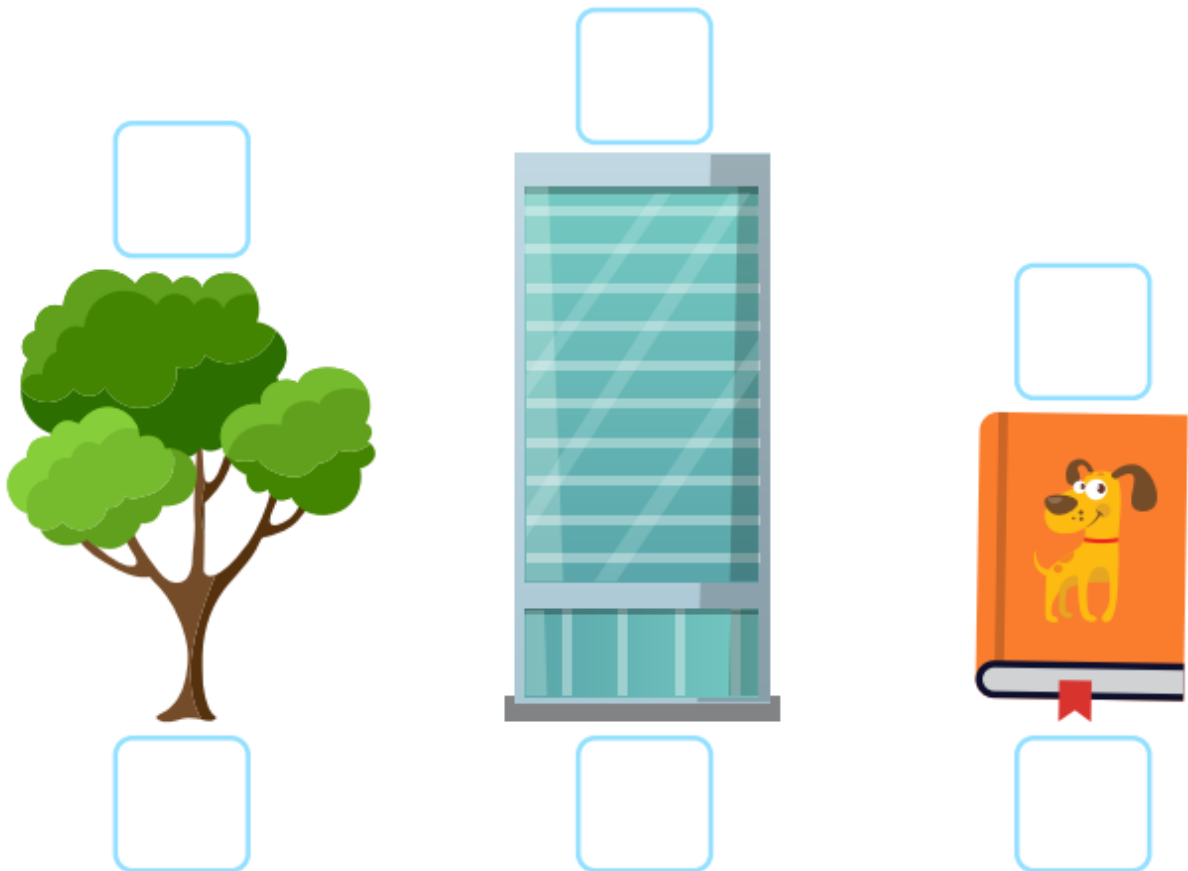
Songs are always a hit with children in preschool. The Bear Hunt Song is a lot of fun and uses positional words such as under, over, through.

There are many resources on our website to support the development of positional vocabulary. The [worksheet](#) below focuses on some of the basic positional words such as top and bottom. Encourage your child to use complete sentences to describe the picture and where the checkmark goes.

Top or Bottom?



Check the **top** of each of these pictures.



Check the **bottom** of each of these pictures.



Here is another [fun preschool activity](#) incorporating the words “in front” and “behind.” Students check off the box that is either in front or behind the image. This worksheet has great cross curricular ties to science that your child will enjoy!

In Front or Behind?

In Front

Check the box next to the pictures that show the butterfly **in front** of something.

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Behind

Check the box next to the pictures that show the caterpillar **behind** something.

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The following [worksheet](#) helps little learners improve their understanding of direction which is closely linked to naming objects' relative positions.

Up or Down?



Check the pictures that show something that is **up** or **is going up**.



Check the pictures that show something that is **down** or **is going down**.



Positional vocabulary words allow your child to interact with the world in a new way. Although they begin to grasp this concept as newborns, more explicit play based instruction will help in the development of these critical skills.

There is so much to learn! Check out our catalogue to keep the learning journey going!

Nora Brown

Elementary Teacher

