DINOSAUR TRAIN

TYPE OF LANGUAGE

- American English
- Conversational

GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

- The series is based on dinosaurs and their adventures around the world on a train. There is a lot of vocabulary about nature, e.g. pond, jungle, swamp, volcano, ocean, as well as vocabulary related to dinosaurs, e.g. herbivore, species, eggs, meat-eaters.

- Each episode has two parts: the cartoon and a presentation by Dr Scott the palaeontologist. The cartoon is mostly a dialogue between the dinosaur characters and much of what they say is to explain or give factual information, e.g. ‘the bee takes a drink from the flower. It’s called nectar. The pollen sticks to its leg…’. There is also a lot of speculative language, e.g. ‘maybe the wind goes through the plates’, ‘It looks like…’, ‘I wonder if…’, ‘He seems to…’. In the second part Dr Scott gives factual information about a specific dinosaur, e.g. description, habitat, what they eat and unique features.

- There is a considerable amount of American colloquialisms, such as ‘way to go!’, ‘you bet!’, ‘take a ride’, ‘It’ll be a blast’, ‘that’s awesome’.

- There are a number of descriptive adjectives, e.g big, hot, cold, smart, small, giant, bright, beautiful, shiny, amazing.
COMMON WORDS & PHRASES

- Good job!
- I love (the time tunnel)
- Have fun!
- You’re right
- Is that how (dinosaurs walk?)
- See you soon
- I’ll help you
- Let’s (play)
- I don’t wanna (go)
- This is fun!
- Watch out!
- I’m gonna (find it)
- I can’t wait!
- Keep an eye out for (the diplodocus)

TIPS

If you are able to do the following ideas in English then great. If you can’t or don’t feel confident in doing so, you can still aid your child’s learning by doing them in Spanish.

- Encourage your child to think about what is happening in the cartoon. Ask questions like Who can you see? Where are they going? Why?

- If you are watching online, stop halfway through. Summarise what's happened so far. Use gesture and facial expression to reinforce meaning (e.g. Buddy’s happy).

- Try to notice the natural language used to express ideas, e.g. do you get it? (as opposed to do you understand?). This kind of natural language comes up a lot and is more authentic than the language children are usually taught at school. Noticing this kind of language will help children to be flexible and understand that there are many different ways to express the same thing.

- Try to pick out words that will be useful for your child, e.g. flowers, train, brother, mum, sun, rain). Later you can review these with your child. Research has shown that staged review helps memorisation and is most effective if reviewed after about 10 minutes, a day, a week and then a month.
• Learn the words to the songs so your child can sing along.

• There are a number of noticeable pronunciation features characteristic of native speakers, e.g. *I’m gonna* (as opposed to *I’m going to*) and *I don’t wanna* (as opposed to *want to*). Try to identify these features and use them, as this will help your child develop both their listening skills and pronunciation.

• At the end of the cartoon, review the story with your child and ask them about their favourite part. Tell them about your favourite too.

• There are a number of Dino Train story books available. Other dinosaur books, e.g. National Geographic Little Kids First Big Book of Dinosaurs may be of interest.