

BUILDING LANGUAGE – What You Can Do!

From the moment they are born, children are ready to learn language. It is *essential* for parents to talk to kids in different ways in order for them to understand and learn to use language.

Have **DAILY CONVERSATIONS** with your child

- A. Talk about people, activities and objects that are not here, not now.
- B. Conversation deepens over multiple turns. Try to talk with your child for at least 5 speaker turns.
- C. Point out new words.
- D. Talk face to face.
- E. Pause when talking and wait for your child to respond; encourage him to take a talking turn.

SELF-TALK using “I” statements

Self-talk is a great way to describe what you are doing and how you are feeling.

- A. When you are getting ready for your child to take a bath say, “O.K. I need to close the drain. There, it’s shut. I need to turn on the water. I’m feeling the water to see when it is just right. Oh, that’s too hot. Now it’s just right. Fill up the bath.”
- B. At the grocery store say, “We need some apples. I like red apples. Let’s buy four apples. One-two-three-four.”

PARALLEL TALK

Talk about what your child is doing, seeing, hearing, feeling as he goes through his day.

- A. When your child is playing with play-doh say, “You have some red play-dough. It feels squishy. You can make a long snake: roll, roll, roll.”
- B. When playing with dolls say, “You’re putting the baby in her bed. Shh, she is sleeping now. The baby is tired.”

EXPAND

Repeat what your child says and add just a little more information, such as a descriptive word (color, shape or size), a word ending (-ing or -s), or a new vocabulary word.

- A. Your child says, “That doggie” and you say, “That is a big doggie.”
- B. Your child says, “Mommy run” and you say, “Mommy is running!”
- C. Your child says, “Popsicle cold” and you say, “The popsicle is frozen.”

SHARED BOOK READING

Look through books together, talking about pictures.

- A. Label, Label, Label: Name the pictures, name the actions, name the colors and the shapes.



- B. Talk about the things that belong together and why they go together (e.g. “cats, dogs, rabbits and birds are all pets. Pets are animals that live with people.”)
- C. Talk about how characters feel and relate it to something your child has experienced.
- D. Guess what will happen next.
- E. Change the story; make up a new ending or a new character.
- F. Sing the words or phrases that are repeated.
- G. Point out a letter and tell your child what sound it makes.
- H. Find the words that rhyme and say them together.
- I. Say, “Tell me more” to get your child to keep talking about the pictures on the page.

Be a STORY TELLER

It is important for children to hear and respond to stories told by other people, just as it is important for them make up their own stories.

- A. Start your story with “Once upon a time...”, “One day...”, “Guess what happened to me...” or another starter to let your child know that you are beginning a story.
- B. Let your child be the star. “Once upon a time there was a little boy named _____. One day, _____ was really excited....”
- C. Stories help you talk about activities or experiences that you have shared with your child. “Once upon a time _____ and his mom went to visit Grandma. Grandma lived far, far away in Madison. Well, one day...”
- D. Stories help your child sequence events and learn about words we use to link ideas. (e.g. “one day”, “first”, “then”, “next”, “after a while”, “later”, etc.)

Planned SABOTAGE

Planned sabotage is another strategy that can encourage expressive language.

- A. Purposefully "forget" an item that your child needs in order to complete an activity (a cup at meal times, crayons when coloring, boots when going out to play in the snow, etc.)
- B. Wait for him to acknowledge that he knows he needs the missing item and make a request for it, whether using a gesture, sound or word approximation.
- C. After he makes his request, model the word and provide wait time for him to attempt to imitate you before giving him the item.
- D. Continue to increase your expectations of his requests- once he consistently uses a certain sound for a given item, model and expect him to imitate/use the first syllable of the item or the final sound of the word approximation (ex: if saying “b” to request his *boots*, encourage/expect “boo” next; if saying “mih” for *milk*, model “milKKK” with an exaggerated /k/ sound and wait for your child to attempt “mih...KKK”)
- E. Praise any of your child’s attempts when using new sounds, even if incorrect.
- F. Be sure to model the entire word correctly again after your child’s attempts.

