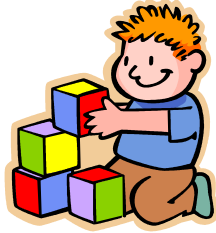


Tips to help develop your child's language!

Play



Play is a hugely important factor in developing language skills. There are many prerequisites to developing language e.g. attention and listening skills/eye contact etc. A great way to develop these areas is simply through play. It also gives the ideal opportunity for you to provide them with language on the activity that you are both engaged in.

A few things to try to remember when playing with your child are:-

Get down onto **child's level**

Sit so that you are **face to face**

Keep language **simple** and **repetitive** e.g. child pretending to wash baby doll, you say 'yeah! wash, wash', or 'wash baby'.

Try to **comment** on what's happening rather than asking them questions e.g. say "look doggies drinking" rather than "what's doggie doing?". When you comment on what's happening then you are giving them the language.

Do not ask too many **questions**, this is testing and doesn't give your child any language or confidence. Try giving the answer to the question you were about to ask e.g. rather than 'what's this?' say 'oh, it's duck!'.

Follow their lead – this enables you to comment on what they are doing and means you share a joint focus. It also means your child will be playing with what they are interested in and they are more likely then to enjoy your playing time. It is great for you to play alongside them with the same activity, copy them and add to their play e.g. if child is making horse jump, you could make horse jump over the fence/tractor/farm.

Encourage **copying** e.g. bashing together bricks, if your child copies you, repeat and see if they copy again – don't forget to praise! This will give them confidence to copy your sounds too.

OBSERVE, WAIT and LISTEN

Make sure you leave **gaps** for the **child** to **initiate** communication.



This mum could be saying "in, in, in" or "seeds in" or "lets plant some seeds".

It can be hard to tell at what level to set your language. Generally try to base it on your child's level and add one word. I.e. if they are saying lots of single words, you can start modelling two words together e.g. child says "car!"; you say "mummy's car"



Keep it simple

Aim your language at your child's level. Do this by thinking whether your child is at the stage of developing different sounds, using one/two words or three and four word sentences. Once you know this try to keep your utterances at this same level and add one word.

If your little one is not saying any words yet you can enjoy making lots of noises together to get them confident experimenting with sounds – don't forget to praise them when they make lots of noise too.

You can also choose a few key words that you think they are motivated by and use those regularly and repetitively. Some first words you might choose could be 'milk', 'more', 'again', 'biscuit', 'banana', 'up', 'jump', 'car', 'bus', 'cat', 'duck', 'eyes' or 'toes' etc. etc.

Imagine if you were learning a foreign language...it would be far easier to pick up the language if someone gave you single words rather than talking to you fast and in long sentences.

It can be a very beneficial to use sign language with your child. This helps you to simplify your sentences and draws extra attention to the key words. From an earlier age it is much easier for an infant to use their hands to communicate than to articulate with their tongues. This ability to communicate helps them to gain lots of confidence and reduces frustration. The child soon begins combining the sign with speech. It has been shown that early signing aids speech development and does not substitute it.

Make lots of silly noises – 'bang,bang'



'toot,toot'



'neeeeeow'



Comment on their activity

Comment on what your child is doing whilst playing e.g. 'wow! Your feeding baby!'. This is a key way to develop your child's language skills. It gives them the words for what they are doing.

This builds the child's confidence too as it lets them know you are watching and are interested in what they are doing. It gives them the language to support their actions.



'water flower'



'wow! Splash, splash, splash!'

Encourage **copying** by you copying your child

If you copy your child they will in turn copy you – initially this may be through actions e.g. hitting pans with spoon - leading on to copying of noises, speech sounds – words – and eventually sentences

Talk about **key parts of the day** at bedtime

This develops the understanding and ability to talk about things that are away from the ‘here and now’



Praise



Praise is so important in building your child’s confidence in producing sounds/ words and sentences.

Remember everyone feels self conscious and nervous when trying out new skills particularly in the presence of lots of experts – encouragement and praise goes a long way.

Try and make it specific so that they know what it is that they have done that is so clever e.g. “Great noise...beep beep”.

Make it genuine and not too gushing or over the top e.g. ‘wow! That is the most spectacular rocket ever made, i am absolutely amazed how great you are’. This puts pressure on the child to always strive for this perfection.

If you praise a behaviour it is more likely to be repeated, therefore giving lots of praise for making little noises will lead to lots more little noises. They will try doing it lots more to make you happy and pleased with them again.

Repetition

It takes repetition for a child to learn and understand words. It might seem obvious but the more a child hears a word, the more they recognise it, and the more likely they are to understand what it means and eventually attempt to use it themselves. This is why it is important to repeat key words regularly.

Use the same **key word** repetitively e.g. ‘clean’ ... talk about how you are going to ‘clean the floor’ ... ‘clean the car’ ... ‘clean the bath’ etc and whilst carrying out the activity continue using the word ‘clean the floor, clean, clean, look all clean! I cleaned the floor’

A great way to do this is through **singing songs** during your routine activities e.g. when brushing their teeth sing... “this is the way we *brush your teeth, brush your teeth, brush your teeth*, this is the way you *brush your teeth, BRUSH, BRUSH BRUSH*” (to round the mulberry bush tune)– this makes the language meaningful and the activity fun.



The words in this song can obviously be swapped for other activities e.g. “this is the way we *wash the plate...*”



Sing simple repetitive songs

Repeating back

It can be helpful to repeat back what your child has said. This shows them that you have listened to them and it also enables you to **model** good speech back to them. E.g. child says “look, dod,” you say “yes! A dog!”

DON'T correct them by saying “no, it's not dod, it's doG”, as this will reduce their confidence.

If you simply repeat it back that will provide them with an excellent model.

Try not to ask them to keep repeating the word back correctly, even if your child can repeat it after you it is likely the next time it will revert back to how they originally said it.

Even if you are unsure as to what your child has said try and use context to say something that he might have been attempting e.g. ‘yeah, great cooking!’

If your child is beginning to get frustrated because you do not know what it is they have said see if they can show you what it is they are trying to say. When you know what they wanted, make sure you give them the word clearly and repeat it regularly. This will enable them to learn the word e.g. ‘oh JUICE!, you want JUICE. A cup of JUICE. Here's JUICE!’

Give CHOICES

Make choices **specific** as this gives your child the language e.g. ‘would you like water or milk?’ rather than saying ‘you want this or this’.

Read books – talk
about pictures –
what might happen
next?



Taking turns and sharing

This is important when communicating. Everyone likes to have a turn at talking and being listened too so it is important that children can develop this skill.

When playing games label people's turns e.g. ‘mummy's turn, charlie's turn, mummy's turn ... etc.

Praise them for doing ‘good sharing!’



Siblings

Make sure that everyone in the family gets a chance to communicate. Even if baby is only making babbling noises these are his attempts to communicate and they need to be encouraged and praised.

It is a good idea to discuss with siblings how they too can help with baby's talking. They love to play and talk to baby so encourage them to keep things simple and repetitive and they too can also really help to bring on their younger siblings talking.

They may need to think about letting their sibling do some talking for themselves and perhaps they can be helpful by repeating back clearly once they have finished.

