



Language and Speech Development- What Can We Do at Home to Help?

Children learn language throughout their daily routine. There are many ways that you can help facilitate this exciting learning process!

- **Read books:** Point to the pictures, name the pictures and talk about the story. Encourage your child to find objects on the page.
- **Label everything:** During your daily routine, talk about what you are doing. Use object words, action words, and concept words.
 - Getting dressed: "Put shirt on", "First socks, then shoes"
 - Bath time: "Arms out", "Wash toes", "Bubbles pop"
 - Going out: "Open door", "Get coat", "Walk outside"
- **Expand Sentences:** If your child is using one word at a time (e.g., "cookie"), add another word, then repeat "want cookie". Encourage your child to imitate this and to combine other words together to make longer sentences.
- **Simplify your language:** Make directions short and simple, use phrases that are slightly longer than your child's phrases.
- **Encourage Communication:**
 - Give choices: "Do you want the car or the truck?"
 - Pause time: It is very easy to anticipate what your child needs. Instead of giving them the desired object immediately, pause and wait for them to say or do something. Encourage any form of communication (gesture, vocalization, babble, or the word).
- **Sabotage:** Put toys or favorite foods out of reach. Instead of the child going to get the toy, it creates an opportunity for requesting. Encourage your child to look at you and gesture or say something to get the desired object.
- **Positive reinforcement:** It is important to reward your child for attempts at communication. The words do not have to be pronounced perfectly. It is important for the child to feel successful when communicating.
- **Eye contact:** Establish and maintain eye contact when communicating with your child.

Ideas for simple games to play:

- Sing songs or finger plays: Encourage your child to complete the sentence (e.g. "Old McDonald had a ____", "where is thumbkin? Here I am")
- I Spy: when you are driving along in the car, encourage your child to look for things out the window. Look for categories of things "I spy some animals, places we can eat, big/small things". Talk about *where* you are going and *what* you are doing.
- Hide and seek with toys: Ask your child "Where is the ____?" Take turns hiding and finding the toys. Talk about concepts like *under, over, on top, behind, next to, far away*.
- Pretend Play: Use dolls, trucks, crayons etc...
- Limit TV, video games, cell phone play: If your child is watching TV, talk about what is happening and "act out" what you see. Encourage your child to get up and dance or participate in the activity. Ask "WH" questions about the show.
- Books and magazines: Look through books and magazines and ask your child to identify pictures by their description or encourage them to describe what is happening using good grammatical skills. If they make errors, model the correct sentence form for them and see if they can imitate it correctly.