

Speech and Language: Strategies for Beginning Language Learners

Parent Workshop 2013

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Areas of speech and language development



TIPS for working on language

- Follow your child's lead. When you have some time, do what your child likes to do and build on it, showing new ways to engage in his activities.
- Expand upon what your child says by making one or two words longer than what he said. Example: If your child says, "It big!" you can add, "Yeah, it's a big plane!"
- Create opportunities to use language. Example: If you have time to involve your child in food preparation, you can use the opportunity to work on vocabulary (not just nouns but verbs and adjectives).
- Point things out to your child so that he can notice what is important in his environment. Example: Show him when something is "rotten" so that he has the experience of what the word means.
- Make links between past and present events. Example: If you find something else that is rotten, you can say, "Remember when we saw the rotten tomatoe in the fridge, THIS is rotten too! See, it's smelly and it's turning brown. We can't eat it because it's *rotten!*"

(A note about working on speech production: Speech production work is specific to each child. If you want tips for working on your child's specific speech difficulties, please make a meeting with your child's Speech-Language Pathologist.)

Vocabulary Tips

Point out new words and show what they mean.

Describe and teach by letting your child touch/feel, for example, that a squash is "bumpy", a rock is "rough" and the glass is "full".



Have your child try and say the new word, even if it's difficult or too long. You can try tapping out the syllables, e.g. ther-mo-stat!

** See the attached page on the order of concept development

Grammar Tips

Word combinations

Help your child make different word combinations, for example, “the blue pants are ripped”, or “the big car is broken”, especially when there is more than one of something. This teaches your child to be specific.



Making longer sentences with little words

With respect to increasing sentence length, you can use visuals to remind your child to add words, for example, “I”, “me”, “with”, “go to”. If you want tips on how to use a visual cue for grammar, ask your Speech Language Pathologist an appropriate cue.

With:



Me:



Go to:



You can also add a word to the end of your child’s sentence to help him add more. For example, if your child says, “She’s sad...” and you say, “because...” he may add the reason to make a longer sentence.

Asking questions

You can have your child repeat the whole phrase to “get him going” to ask a question. For example you can say, “Say ‘do you like...?’” or “Can I have...?”

Questions involve a lot of grammar and confusing rules. For example, the statement is “It is lunchtime” but the question is, “Is it lunchtime?” Model for your child and have him repeat the correct order. You may have to do this for some time before it becomes automatic.

Don’t expect your child to use all parts of grammar at once. If your child is working on adding more words to his sentences, content is more important than form. For example, the meaning still gets across if your child says, “Boy go store” and not “The boy is going to the store”. Sometimes when we try to have them repeat more words, others are omitted because the language load is too heavy.

Comprehension

Understanding questions

Explain how to answer certain questions if your child does not understand. For example: *When* means you have to tell me a time, or a month, or...

** See attached page for WH question visual support.

Understanding the environment: Explain how things work by showing examples, e.g. thermostat is like the light switch but for the heater.

Reading and Retelling Stories

Explain the development of a story and the reasons for characters’ actions/feelings.

The questions to answer when retelling a story are:

Who? Where? What was the problem? How did it get fixed? Feelings at the end

The key to working on story retelling skills is to choose GOOD BOOKS!

- Choose books with clear pictures that your child likes.
- Choose books with a clear storyline that makes sense

Reading is great but you don’t have to. You can work on expressive language skills by talking about the pictures- that is why choosing a book with good pictures is important.

Good books can also help you work on questions, e.g. Why is she sad? BECAUSE the boots are too small.

Activity ideas

- Toys that need assembling, e.g. marble maze (tall, taller, tallest, blue tower is the...), screwdriver set, category puzzles.
- Board games:
 - Lunch Box game, Crazy Chefs (by Orchard Toys)
 - What a Performance
- Magnetic boards for making sentences/telling stories. Take turns so you can model ideas and grammar.
- Card games, e.g. verb cards for matching or even just “find the same”, also “game vocabulary” , for example same/different, match, more, winner, good game, do you want to play? Can we play?