

Strategies for Building Language and Communication Skills in Children



In this booklet, you will find strategies that promote communication and language development of infants, toddlers and young children. Research and practice have shown that these strategies are effective in promoting the communication of infants and toddlers with and without disabilities. In fact, you and others in your home may already be using some of these strategies.

This booklet also provides examples of how speech and language stimulation strategies may be used across various contexts such as home, routines and playtime.

Foreword

"Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be."
— Rita F. Pierson

With the objective of enhancing children's development of language and communication skills, the CPAS Speech and Language Pathology department is excited to share some of the communication strategies that we have found effective over the course of our daily work and interaction with children.

Together, we have distilled a compilation of key ideas, practical techniques and descriptions, with illustrations that can be implemented into the daily routines of the child. We hope that the information shared in this book will serve as a substantial resource for parents, educators, and fellow speech therapists alike.

First, it provides an overview of the developmental milestones across the speech and language domain for a clearer understanding of the child's current level of functioning. Second, the book imparts a range of activities that can be embedded in the child's daily routines such as: bathing, eating, playing, sleeping, etc. Third, it offers a so-called 'sample homework' sheet for planning activities for children to begin with.

This publication entitled *Strategies for Building Language and Communication Skills in Children* hopes to foster a better understanding of how parents can more effectively serve as a facilitator in the building of language and communication skills in their children.

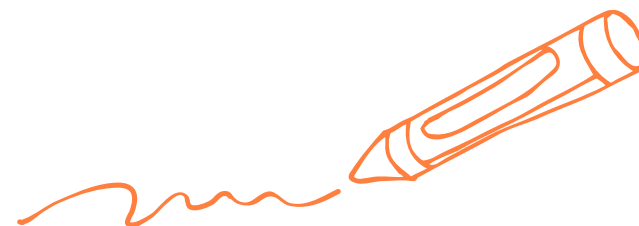
I commend all Speech and Language Therapists in the department for their commitment, dedication and essence of knowledge in sharing each and every strategy with concrete examples. I am truly humbled by their selfless effort, the unconquerable spirit and best of all, the ability to be cheerful even at the end of a long day at work!

Sunitha Sendhilnathan

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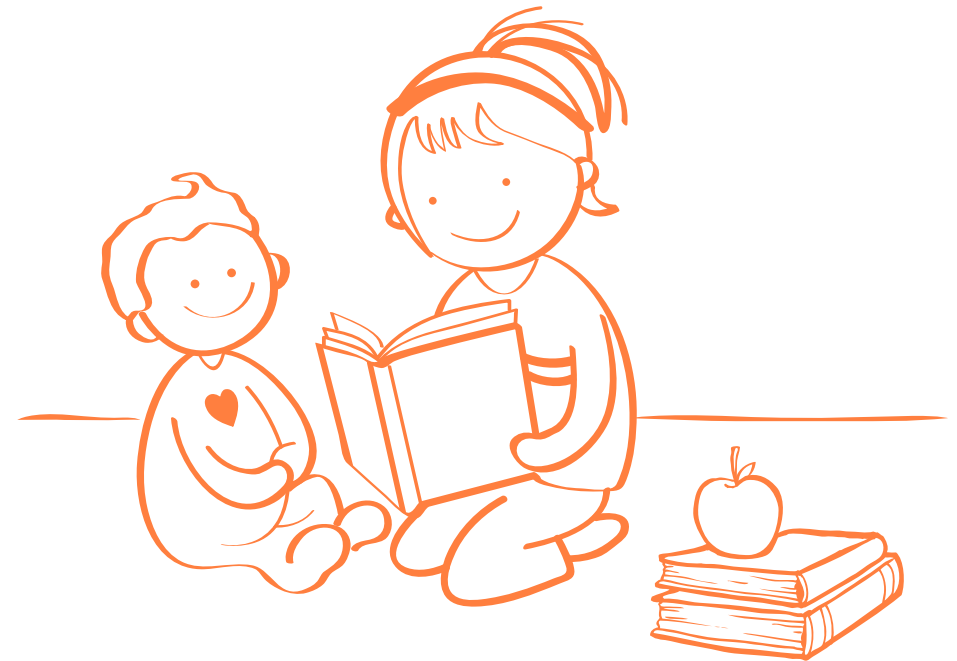
Speech & Language Milestones

The development of communication skills begins in infancy, before the emergence of the first word. Any speech or language problem is likely to have a significant effect on the child's social and academic skills as well as behaviour. The earlier a child's speech and language problems are identified and treated, the less likely it is that problems will persist or get worse.

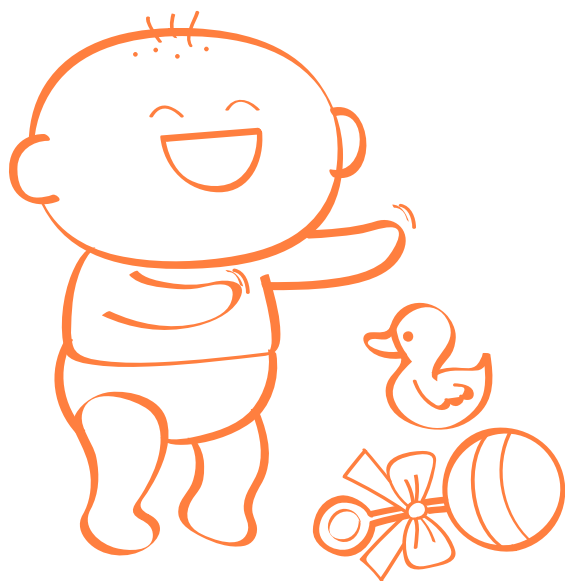
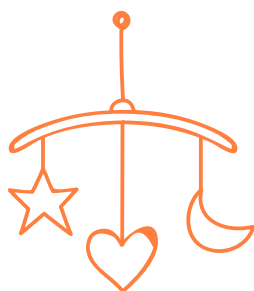
Early speech and language intervention can help children be more successful with reading,

writing, schoolwork, and interpersonal relationships.

This information represents, on average, the age by which most monolingual speaking children will accomplish the listed milestones. Children typically do not master all items in a category until they reach the upper age in each age range. Just because your child has not accomplished one skill within an age range does not mean the child has a disorder.



Speech & Language Milestones



	Listening ▼	Understanding ▼	Speech Sounds & Talk ▼	Social Skills ▼
Age 0 – 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns towards a familiar sound • Startled by loud sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises parent's voice • Often calmed by familiar, friendly voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently cries, especially when uncomfortable or unhappy • Makes vocal sounds (cooing, gurgling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gazes at faces and copies facial movements • Makes eye contact for fairly long periods
Age 3 – 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watches face when someone talks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows excitement at sound of approaching voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes vocal noises to get attention • Makes sounds back when talked to • Laughs during play • Babbles to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cries in different ways to express various needs • Senses different emotions in parent's voice and may respond differently
Age 6 – 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locates source of voice with accuracy • Focuses on different sounds (doorbell, phone ringing, sneeze) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands frequently used words (e.g. no, hello, milk) • Stops and looks when hears own name • Understands simple instructions when supported with gestures and content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults – says sounds like baba, gaga • Uses gestures such as waving and pointing to help communicate • Begins to use single words at around 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys action rhymes and song • Tries to copy adult speech and lip movements • Takes turns in conversation (using babbles)
Age 12 – 15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends to music and singing • Enjoys noise-making objects and toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands single words in context (e.g. cup, milk, daddy) • Understands more words than they can say • Understands single instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says around 10 single words, although it might not be clear • Reaches or points to something they want while making speech sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes being with familiar adults • Likes watching adults for a short period of time

Age 15 – 18 months

Listening	Understanding	Speech Sounds & Talk	Social Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens and responds to single information or narration (e.g. give this to daddy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands a wide range of single words and two-word phrases Recognises and points to objects and pictures in books if asked Gives familiar objects to adult (e.g. cup, book) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still babbles but says 20 single words correctly, although it may not be clear Copies gestures and words from adults Constant babbling and single words used during play Uses intonation, pitch, and changing volume when 'talking' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple pretend play Plays alone, although likes to be near familiar adults Although increasingly independent, happiest when near familiar adults

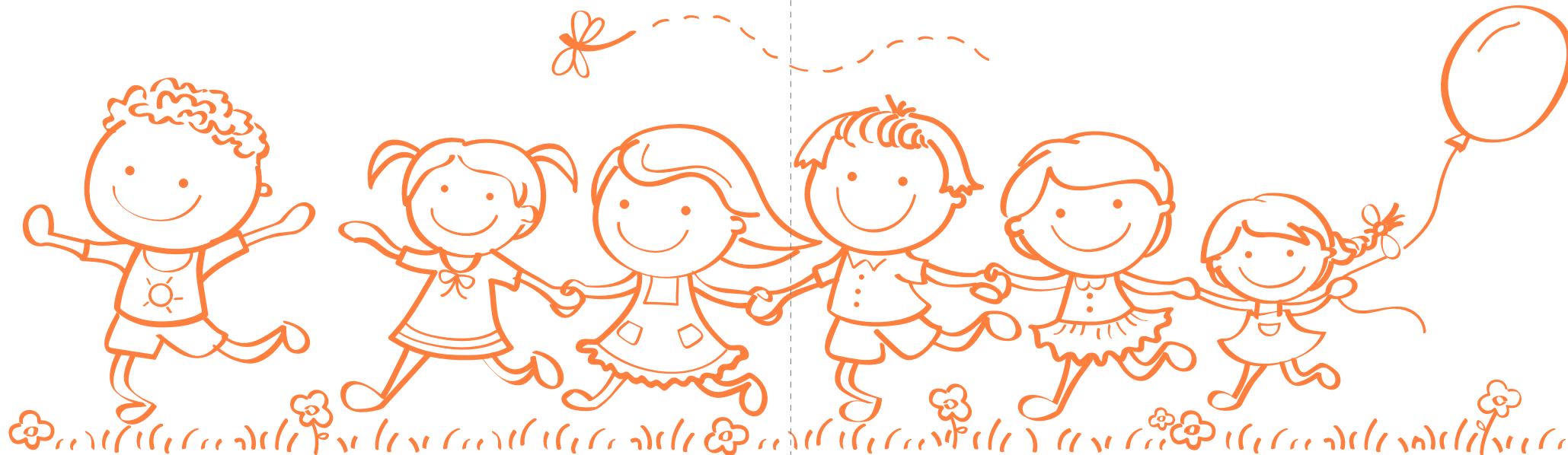
Age 18 months – 2 years

Listening	Understanding	Speech Sounds & Talk	Social Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on activity of their own choice, but finds it difficult to be directed by adult Use of child's name beginning to help them to attend to what an adult says 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of single words develops rapidly during this stage, between 200-500 words are known Understands more simple instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses up to 50 words Begins to put two to three words together Frequently asks questions (e.g. names of people, objects) Uses many different consonant sounds of the beginning of words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pretend play developing with toys (e.g. feeding doll, or driving a car) Becomes frustrated when unable to make self understood – this may result in tantrums Follows adult body language, including pointing, gesture, and facial expression

Age 2 – 3 years

Listening	Understanding	Speech Sounds & Talk	Social Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning to listen with interest, but easily distracted Listens to talks addressed to him/herself, but finds it difficult if prompts are not provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing understanding of simple concepts including big/little, in/on/under Understand phrases like "get your bag, water bottle and snacks", "draw a big white cloud" Understand simple "who, what, where" questions (but not "why") Understands a simple story when supported with pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses 300 words including descriptive language; time, space, function Use 4 or 5 words together May stutter or stammer when thinking about what to say Able to use pronouns (me, him, she), plurals and prepositions (beside, in, under) Has problems saying some speech sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds a conversation but jumps from topic to topic Interested in others' play, and will join in Expresses emotion towards adults and peers using words, phrases, and not just actions





Age **3 – 4**
years

Listening

Understanding

Speech Sounds & Talk

Social Skills

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys listening to stories • Still finds it difficult to attend to more than one thing at a time, so can't easily listen to a speaker whilst carrying on an activity • Has to switch attention between speaker and task | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands questions or instructions with two parts (e.g. take your water bottle, stand by the door) • Understand "why" questions • Aware of some relation to past, present, and future (e.g. Today is sunny, yesterday was rainy. I hope tomorrow is sunny too.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sentences of 4 to 6 words • Uses future and past tense (e.g. I am going shopping, I walked home.) • May continue to have irregular words (e.g. 'runned' for run, 'sticked' for stuck) • Able to remember and enjoys telling long stories and singing songs • Has some problems saying /r/, /j/, /th/, /ch/, and /sh/ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands turn-taking as well as sharing with peers and adults • Initiates conversations • Enjoys playing with peers • Able to argue with adults or peers – disagree using words, not just actions |
|--|--|---|---|

Age **4 – 5**
years

Listening

Understanding

Speech Sounds & Talk

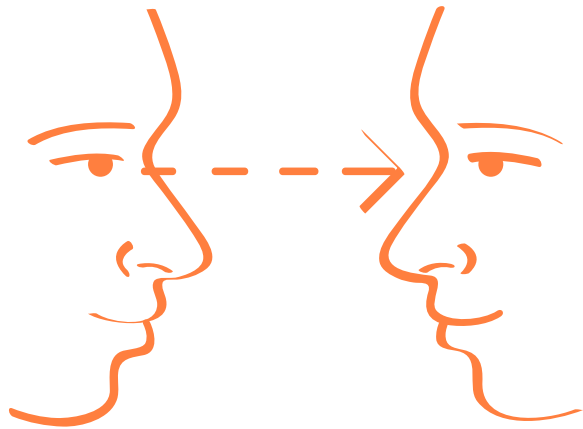
Social Skills

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention is now more flexible. The child can now understand spoken instruction related to the task | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to understand simple stories without pictures • Understand stories with sequencing words (e.g. first, then, last) • Understands adjectives (e.g. soft, smooth, hard) • Aware of more complex humour; laughs when jokes are told | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses well-formed sentences (e.g. I played with my friend during lunch), but there may be some grammatical errors • Easily understood by adults and peers with only some inaccuracies in speech sounds (e.g. /th/, /r/), and three-consonant combinations • Frequently asks the meaning of unfamiliar words and uses them randomly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses own friends • Generally co-operative with playmates • Able to plan construction and make-believe play activities (e.g. building models from lego blocks) • Takes turns in longer conversations • Uses language to gain information, negotiate, discuss feelings and give opinions |
|---|---|---|---|

**Building Blocks
of Language &
Communication
Skills**



Eye Contact



Facial expressions convey a person's emotions.

Eye contact is usually a good indicator of their feelings.

Effective communicators use eye contact to let people know they are paying attention, and to establish trust, as well as provide reassurance. To encourage eye contact during play time, you can gently remove an item that your child is playing with, provide some sound effects, and bring the object near your eyes. The more your child is encouraged to look at you, the better their ability to develop joint attention and social referencing.

Suggested strategies & activities

Address Your Child by Their Given Name

As much as you can, call your child by their given name. Using their given name not only familiarizes your child to their name, but also, it will allow them to have the appropriate respond to their name being called. You can use some other auditory highlighting such as saying their name in a singsong manner or using different voices and sound effects.

Use Items which They Like

Children have very clear preferences, especially when it comes to their play items. As such, when trying to motivate them, use toys or objects that would encourage them to look at you as a form of request. You can try to hide the items and gain their attention by calling them by their name. This would encourage them to look at you as a way of communicating their wants or need.

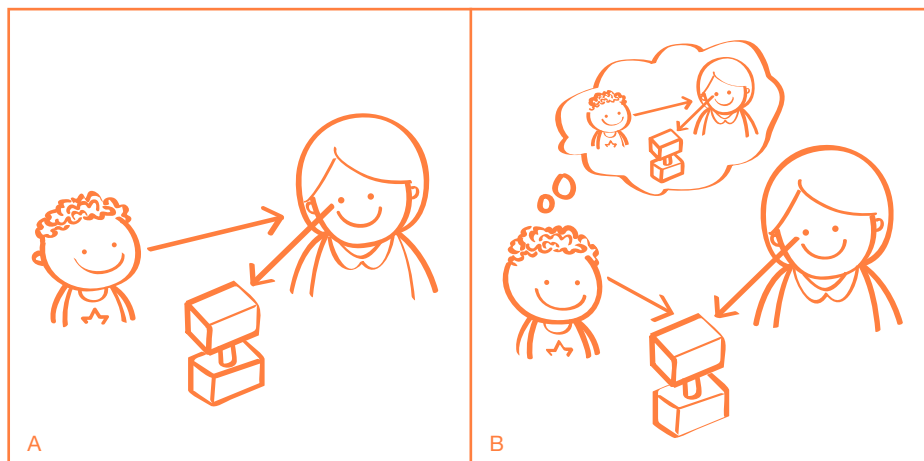
Child's Eye Level

It is easier for a child to have eye contact with you if you are at their eye level. This means that you may have to squat or sit on a lower chair to ensure that their gaze is able to find yours.

Exaggerate Your Gestures

Sometimes, children respond better when you use bigger and more exaggerated gestures when you talk. Your animated manner would help gain their attention, and hence enhance their eye contact.

Joint Attention



Joint attention occurs when two people share an interest in an object/event and there is an understanding that they both are interested in that same object/event.

The goal is to provide opportunities for the child to initiate and/or respond to joint attention.

For example: a parent and child are playing together, the parent looks at and points to a toy car and says “Look at that car.” Eventually, the child will start to check back with the parent, alternating his gaze between the parent and the toy car, confirming that their attention is still on the toy car.

Suggested strategies & activities

Be a Good Language Model

- Use gestures (pointing, along with eye gaze, to show the child where to direct his/her focus).
- Teach your child using hand-over-hand teaching techniques (you can take your child’s hand and help him/her point to an object to practice gestures).

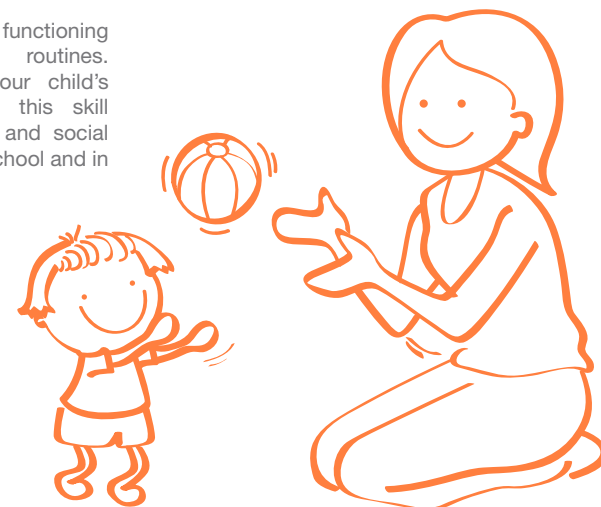
Follow Your Child’s Lead

When your child chooses an item he/she prefers, allow them to play with it, since they are motivated by it. Mimic that interest by doing the following:

- **Commenting:** “You are looking at the ball. You want the ball. Big, round ball. Bounce, bounce, bounce.”
- **Pointing:** Point to the ball while looking at the ball and back at your child.
- **Adding a visual cue:** You can use some pictures to represent the ball, and match them to the actual object.

During Daily Routines: Brushing Teeth, Having Meals, Walking to School

Children respond better to daily functioning when they have consistent routines. Practising joint attention in your child’s natural environment can help this skill generalise from communicative and social success at home to success in school and in the community.



Visual & Auditory Awareness



Visual and auditory awareness is your child's ability to be aware of sights and sounds occurring around him and to recognize this information.

This is important because a child must be aware of what is going on around him before he can learn about them.

Suggested strategies & activities

Visual Awareness

- Watch actions taking place (e.g. trains on tracks, car on the road, a girl painting)
- Point to objects and encourage your child to look at them (e.g. kites flying in the sky)
- Blow bubbles and watch the bubbles float in the air
- Look at objects outside (e.g. point to birds and trees, clouds moving)
- Look at objects inside (e.g. look for your child's favourite toy)
- Look through books and get the child to point out their favourite pictures

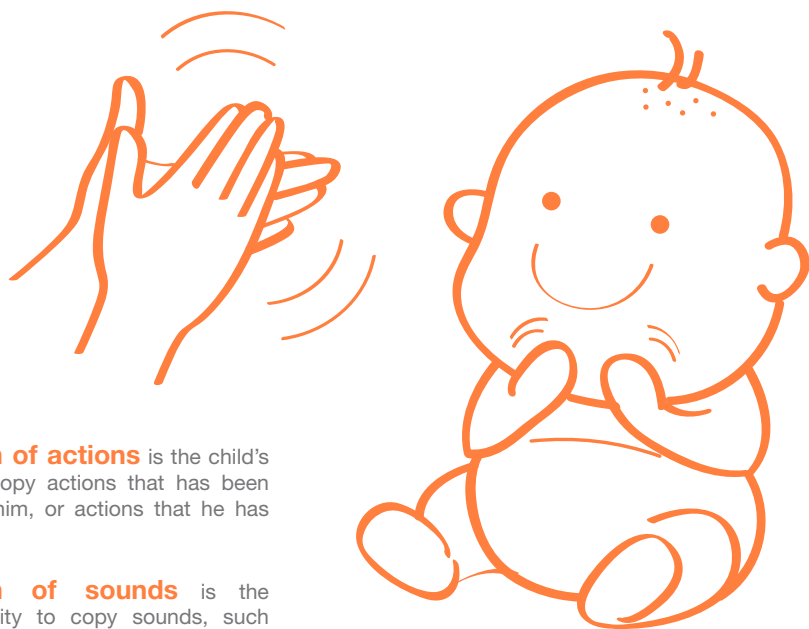


Auditory Awareness

- Identify sounds of objects around the house (e.g. telephone ringing, water running)
- Identify sounds outside (e.g. dog barking, plane roaring, truck screeching)
- Assist your child to respond appropriately to loud and soft music



Imitation of Actions & Sounds



Imitation of actions is the child's ability to copy actions that has been shown to him, or actions that he has observed.

Imitation of sounds is the child's ability to copy sounds, such as intonation patterns, environmental sounds, speech sounds, and words. Some children may initially have difficulty combining an action with a vocalisation. They may be able to do each separately but not together. Gradually, we need to encourage them to aim for both imitation of sounds and words.

Suggested strategies & activities

Encourage Your Child to Imitate Using Their Favourite Toys

For example; if your child enjoys playing with blocks, as you stack each block, say 'up', then give a block to your child to stack.

If your child cannot do this on his own, hand-over-hand guidance may be required. This is done by gently placing your hand over the child's and guiding his actions to copy yours.

Encourage Your Child to Imitate Simple Animal Sounds

Use puppets or toys of animals (cat, dog, cow). Prolong the sound that the animals make slightly: 'meeeeow', 'wooff', 'mmooo'. Animal sounds are a great way to begin teaching sounds, as they are early developmental sounds, and thus, would be easy for your child to imitate. They also encourage the use of lip and tongue muscles.

Encourage Your Child to Copy You Making Different Marks on the Paper

Use vocalisation for each action you do; for example: when putting dots on a page, say "d, d, d", or when you are drawing lines across the page, you can say "swisssh, swisssh, swisssh".

Encourage Imitation of Inflection

When drawing a line up the page – say a slow 'uuuuupppp' followed by 'dooowwnn' as you draw the line down the page.

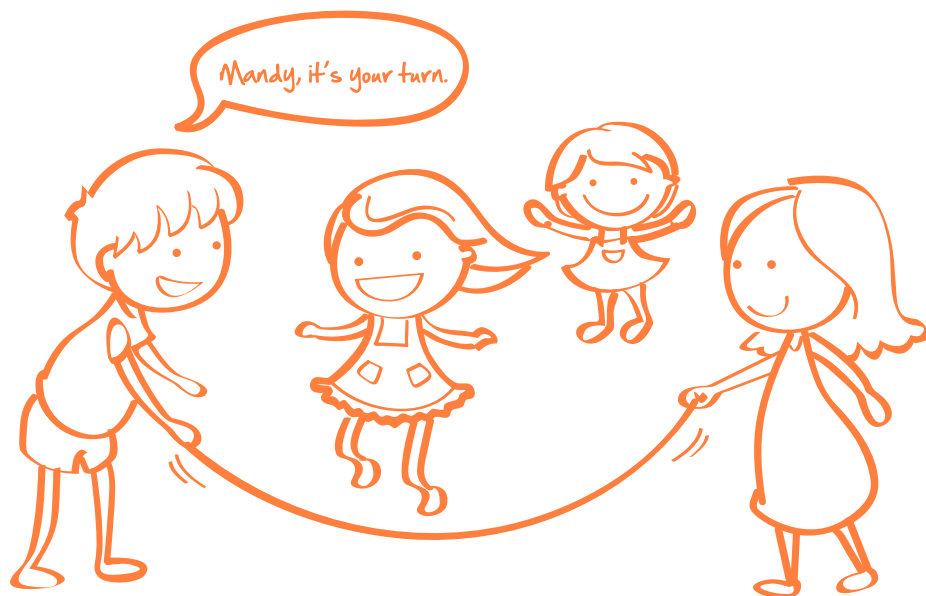
Sing 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm'

Sing 'Old MacDonald had a Farm' and hold up the appropriate animal as you make the animal sound.

Blow Bubbles

Blow bubbles, and encourage your child to say "pop" while popping each bubble slowly, one at the time with your fingers.

Turn Taking



Taking turns is one of the most important social skills needed in day-to-day life.

Your child can start learning to take turns during an activity, and then gradually, move to taking turns in verbal interactions. It is also necessary when it comes to developing friendships, communicating with others, and playing games.

Turn-taking needs to be taught and practised, not just in a classroom, but in real-life settings. For example: The adult pushes the ball towards the child, and the child understands that they should push it back to the adult. As the child becomes older, they recognise that when the adult asks for a response, they need to respond.

Suggested strategies & activities

Social Stories

You can start teaching turn-taking by using social stories. There are many examples online, or you can make up your own. For example: When you go to the playground, you can make-up a story and say "Look, there are many friends here. You will have to wait in line, but it's okay. You will get your turn soon."

Familiar Language

Make the language of turn-taking familiar and usable for your child. Routinely use simple language to describe turn-taking: "My turn, your turn." You can use verbal reminders as well as some gentle physical prompts.

For example, if they try to skip your turn, place your hand on top of theirs and say: "my turn". When it is your child's turn, it is their turn to put their hand on top of yours. If the concept of 'my' and 'your' is too difficult to understand, start by using actual names: "Mummy's turn. Adam's turn."

Model Turn Taking

Teaching your child by modelling can be very helpful. You can ask their sibling or another child to act out appropriate behaviours with you. Show your child how you are taking turns playing a game, talking to another, using a computer etc.

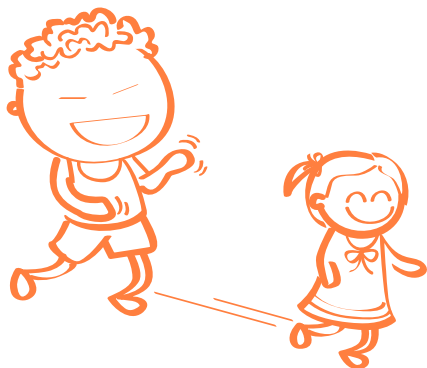


Game Ideas

to work on the building blocks of communication

Tickle-and-chase Game

You can run and try to catch your child and tickle them, chase them. Stop the activity and wait a few seconds to see if your child looks at you to continue the game with them.



Best-funny-face Competition

Use a variety of props or items such as big glasses, hats, wigs, and masks. Put them on and take them off to encourage your child to look at you. You can use funny voices as well.



Action Games

Play a few action games such as rolling a ball, playing on a swing, toy car racing. Before they take a turn on the swing, ask them to look at you first.



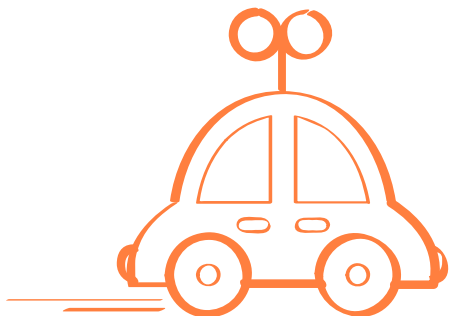
Bubbles

Blowing bubbles encourages your child to look at you. Wait for your child to look at you, before you blow more bubbles.



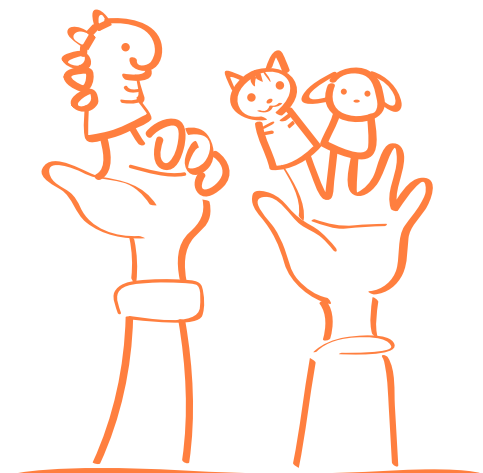
Game Ideas

to work on the building blocks of communication



Wind-up Toys

Wind up these toys, and make sound effects as you and your child watches the toy move. When the toy stops, wait for your child to look at you (you can bring the toy up and put it near your eyes to encourage your child to look at your eyes).

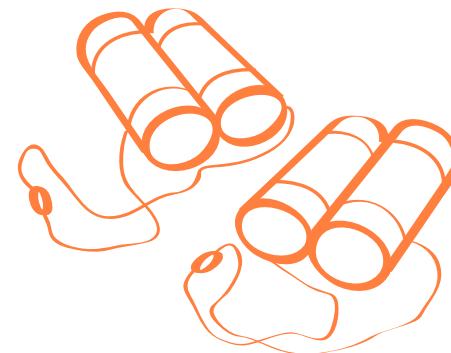


Puppets or Finger Puppets

Bring the puppets close to your face and make them talk as you tell a story. Make different sound effects (e.g. 'mooooo' for cow, 'takatakataka' for helicopter). Exaggerate your movements and facial expression when showing the puppets to your child.

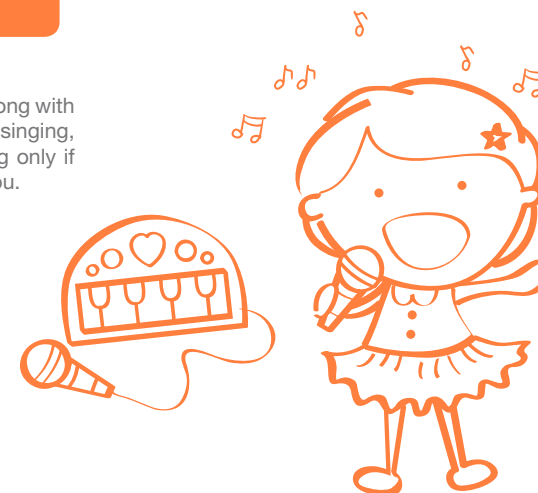
Arts and Craft Binoculars

Use old cardboard toilet paper tubes to make your own binoculars. Look at each other through the tube, or point at various sites for your child to explore together.



Karaoke or Toy Microphones for Children

Play a tune on your device or sing a song with your child. Stop your device or stop singing, then wait. Continue singing then sing only if your child makes eye contact with you.



Language & Communication Skills



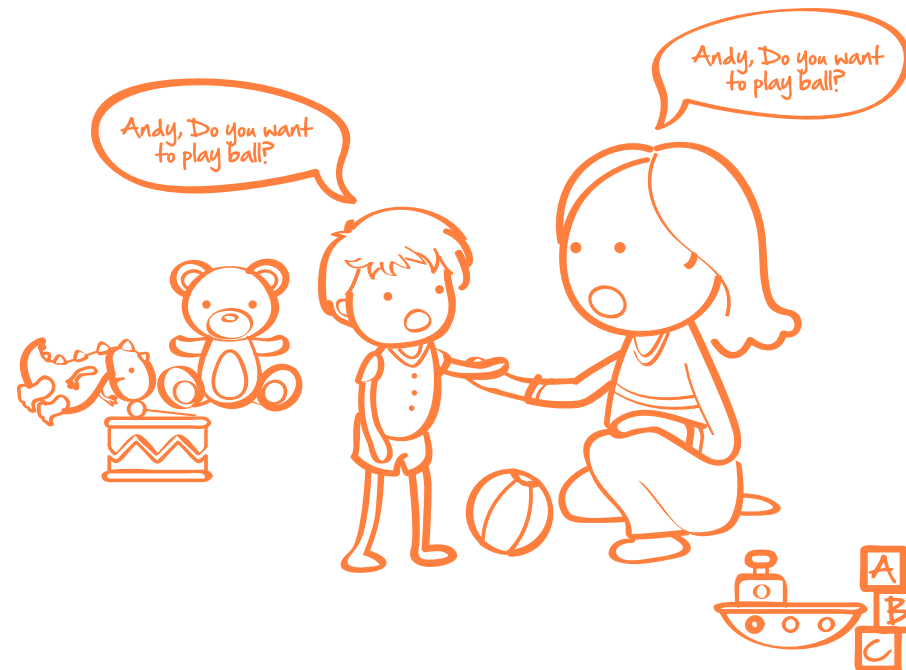
Receptive Language

What is meant by 'receptive language'?

Receptive language is the ability to understand language.

It involves gaining information and meaning from:

- Routines (e.g. we have finished our breakfast so next it is time to get dressed)
- Visual information within the environment (e.g. mum holding her keys means that we are going to get the car, a green light means go)
- Sounds and words (e.g. a siren means a fire engine is coming down the street, the word 'ball' means a round bouncy thing we play with, etc.)
- Concepts such as size, shape, colours and time, grammar and written information (e.g. signs in the environment like "no climbing", written stories).



Symptoms of difficulty in receptive language

- Has difficulty attending and listening to language
- Does not pay attention within group times at kindergarten and school
- Does not follow instructions that others of the same age would be able to follow
- Responds to questions by repeating what you say instead of giving an answer
- Finds it difficult to listen to stories
- Gives unusual answers to questions



Strategies to Improve Receptive Language

Eye-contact

Obtain the child's eye contact before giving them an instruction.

Use Simple Language

Keep your language simple while interacting with your child.

Minimal Instructions

Avoid giving too many instructions at once.

Face-to-face

Get face to face with the child when talking by sitting down on the floor while the child is seated in a small chair, kneeling down to get to the child's level while the child is standing, etc.

Describe

In everyday activities, describe to the child what they are doing (e.g. when the child is packing up their toys you might say: "Put the toys in the box" or when dressing/undressing you might say: "Take your shoes off/Put your shoes on."

Repeat

Ask the child to repeat the instruction to ensure that they have understood what they need to do (e.g. "Go and get your bag then sit at the table. What do I want you to do?").

'First/then'

Use this concept to help the child know what order they need to complete the command (e.g. "First get your bag, then put on your shoes").

Show

Physically show (demonstrate, point, show a picture) the child what to do when giving them an instruction.

Visual Aids

Pictures, gestures, body language, facial expression can be used to assist the child's understanding and recall of the instruction.

Model New Words

Play activities with the child that they really enjoy and model new words and phrases throughout the game.

Reduce Background Noise

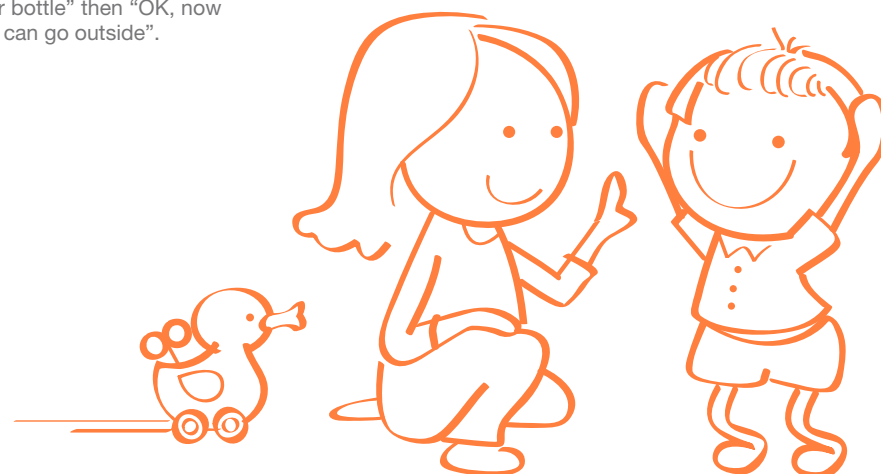
Turn off background noise in the home (e.g. television, radio, music) when engaging with the child to reduce/minimise distractions.

Highlight or Emphasise

Highlight/emphasise the word that you want the child to learn about and repeat the concept in a variety of situations or settings so that the child sees the different ways in which a concept can be used (e.g. "Lights on" vs. "The book is on the table").

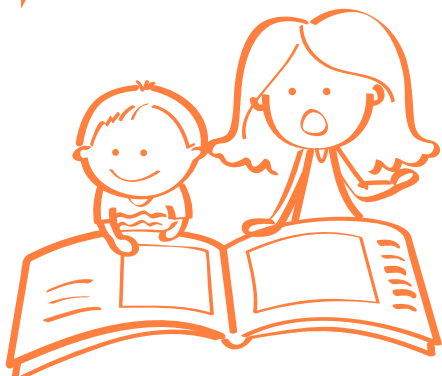
Chunk Verbal Instructions Into Parts

Instead of "Go and get your lunch box and your bottle and go outside", say "Get your lunch box." When the child has followed that instruction, say: "Now get your bottle" then "OK, now you can go outside".



Activities for Building Receptive Language

Read Books



- Encourage your child to find and point to pictures on the pages
- Draw their attention to pictures by labelling and pointing to them in order to expand vocabulary
- Re-state important parts of the story and ask questions to support story comprehension

I Spy



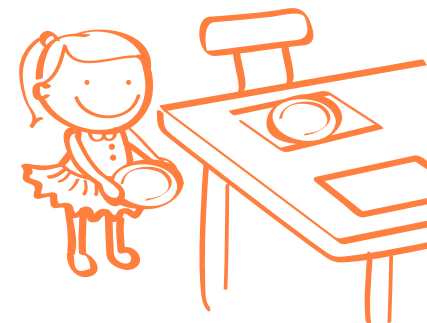
- This activity is similar to reading books with your child. Label and point to pictures on the pages of an "I Spy" book
- Make it a game and see who can find the most objects on the page!
- Make it more challenging by assigning specific items to you and your child that incorporate basic concepts ("You find a small key and I'll find a big one!")
- You can also play "I Spy" without the book and find objects around the house or in your community

Simon Says



- This classic game is a great way to target following directions
- Take turns with the child in following and giving instructions
- Gradually increase the length of the command that is provided (e.g. 'Simon says touch your toes'; 'Simon says first touch your toes, then clap your hands'; 'Simon says before you shout hurrah, count to 10')
- Additionally, reinforce body parts (e.g. pat your head, pull your ear) and simple verbs (e.g. jump, shake) when playing the activity

Mealtime

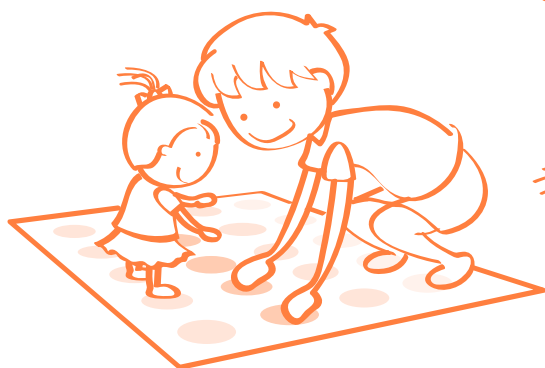


- Have your child set the dinner table each night
- Start by giving your child one-step directions with you demonstrating the task first. (e.g. "Put the plates on the table.")
- Once your child can do one step directions with a model, remove the model and just give verbal directions
- Don't be afraid to be silly! Directions such as, "Put one napkin on your head", will help you tell if your child really understands
- Increase the complexity by adding two to three step directions. (e.g. "Get the spoon and fork, and set them next to the plate.")

Activities for Building Receptive Language

Twister

- Play this exciting game to target following directions and learning basic concepts!
- Basic concepts include: right and left, colours, and body parts
- If this is too challenging for your child, you can make it simpler by focusing on certain aspects. You can hop to different colours or place a body part on a certain colour



Play

- Engage in play with your child and their toys!
- You can target verbs, such as running, jumping, or sleeping
- Work on basic concepts like in, on, and off
- Follow your child's lead while being an accurate model for language
- Encourage creativity through play!



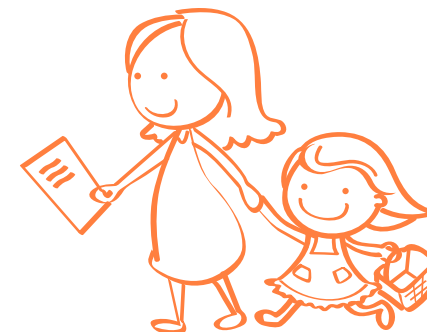
Puzzles

- You can take turns in putting a puzzle together
- Have your child find specific pieces and answer questions about them. (e.g. "Find the car! What does a car say?")
- Label all the pieces to help increase your child's vocabulary
- You can also come up with other pieces that might belong in the puzzle. For example, if the puzzle is all about zoo animals, think of additional zoo animals that were not included in the puzzle



Grocery Shopping

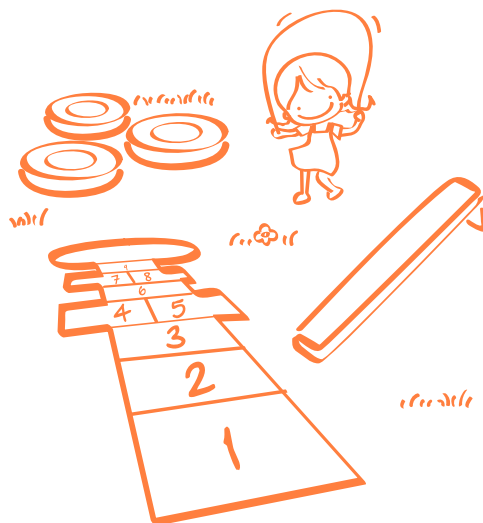
- Create a shopping list, including pictures if necessary, and have your child go shopping with you
- Give directions such as "The cereal is in the cupboard" or ask questions such as "Where do we take the milk from?"
- You can expand the activity by getting the child to pick items of daily use such as diapers, fruits, vegetables, etc



Activities for Building Receptive Language

Feely Bag Game

- Place different everyday objects (e.g. toothbrush, car, cup, block) into a bag
- Take turns with the child in taking an item out of the bag. Encourage the child to:
 - Reach into the bag and try to guess what the item is before taking it out
 - Describe characteristics about the item once they have pulled it out of the bag (e.g. colour, shape, function)
 - Answer questions about the item that they have pulled out (e.g. "Is it round? Can you eat it?")
 - Guess the item that you have pulled out of the bag by asking you questions

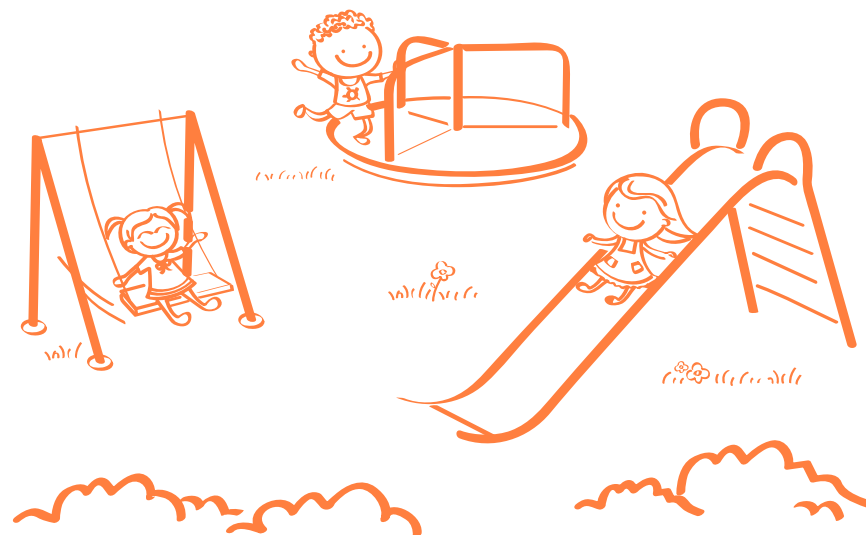


Obstacle Course

- Put together an obstacle course in the house or outside in the backyard
- Take turns with the child in following and giving instructions
- Gradually increase the length of the command that is provided (e.g. run to the sandpit; first run to the sandpit, then crawl over to the bikes)

At the Park

- Head to the local playground or park
- Think about all the different vocabulary items at the park
- First talk about all the things you see (sidewalk, monkey bars, slide, grass, swings, sand, trashcans, etc.)
- Next, have a big race. Name one item in the park and let your child race to that item
- You could also play I-Spy by giving clues about one of the objects. When giving clues think about naming the function of the object ("slide on it"), visual description ("it's tall and red") and location clues ("it's at the top of the jungle gym"). Then let your child guess the item ("a slide!")



Receptive Language Plan your activities! (sample)

Choose an activity/game/routine:



My child will:
(your goals for your child)

- Look/listen to me (pre-verbal skill)
- Follow my instruction (receptive language)

I will help my child do this by:
(strategies that you plan to use)

- Getting my child's attention by exaggerating my voice and gestures
- Modeling the gesture to my child and getting him to imitate

Responses from my child:
(make a note of how your child is responding)

Date	Response from my child

Receptive Language Plan your activities!

Choose an activity/game/routine:

My child will:
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I will help my child do this by:
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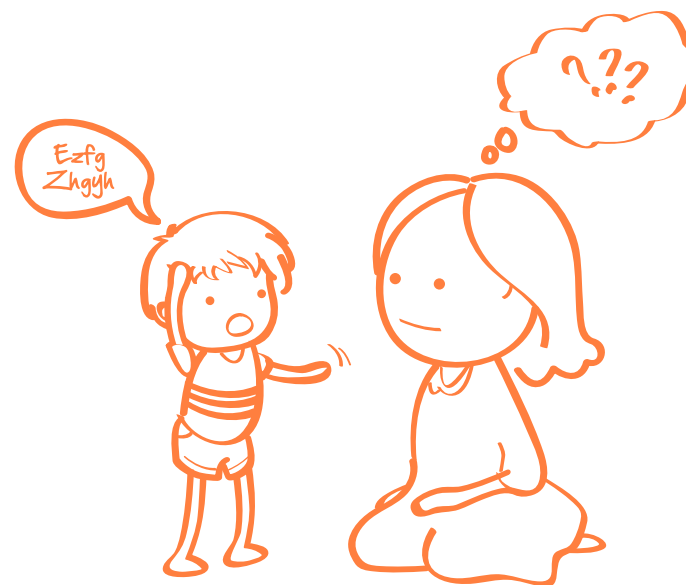
Expressive Language

What is expressive language (using words and language)?

Expressive language is the use of words, sentences, gestures and writing to convey meaning and messages to others.

Expressive language skills include being able to:

- Express wants and needs
- Express thoughts and ideas
- Label objects in the environment
- Describe actions and events
- Put words together in sentences
- Use grammar correctly (e.g. "I had a drink" not "Me drank")
- Retell a story and answer questions
- Argue a point of view



Symptoms of difficulty in expressive language

- Has difficulty naming items and objects
- Does not link together words or uses sentences that are shorter than others of the same age
- Uses 'jargon' (made-up words) in speech
- Produces sentences that are 'muddled' (e.g. words in wrong order, lots of stops and starts, a lack of flow)
- Is not understood by unfamiliar people
- Has difficulty finding the right words to use in conversation or when describing or explaining something
- Has trouble retelling a story



Strategies to Improve Expressive Language

Modeling

- Children need to hear speech in order to imitate speech.
- During play and daily routines always talk to your child about what you are doing (e.g. “put your arms into your shirt” or “Mommy is cooking breakfast”).
- If your child makes an attempt at a word, but it is not clear, remember that most young children cannot pronounce many words correctly and that is ok. If your child says “ba” for “ball” consistently, this is his word for “ball”. Be sure you always pronounce it correctly with the “l” sound on the end, so he hears it correctly.



Expansion

When your child labels or says a single word, always expand on that word so your child hears it in a simple sentence. For example, if your child says “baby”, you can say “The baby is sleeping,” or if your child says “more” you can state: “You want more juice”.

Choices

- Always give choices during meal and play time when possible to encourage your child to use a gesture/vocalisation to communicate his wants/needs.
- If your child points toward the kitchen when he is hungry, give him a choice by holding up his cup and then showing him the milk and juice and asking “Are you thirsty? Do you want milk or juice?”
- Let your child make a choice by looking/pointing/touching/vocalising/using words.

Waiting or Withholding

- First always give your child time to respond before giving the desired object/food.
- Your child may just need extra time to respond. Withhold the child’s desired object/food until he uses or attempts to use a word/sign for it.



Imitation

- Young children love to imitate. Start by imitating something that your child already does, especially something fun or silly like making faces or unusual sounds.
- Move to imitation of new actions by singing songs like “Wheels on the Bus” or imitation of environmental or animal sounds such as “whee, zoom, beep-beep, ding-dong, uh-oh, moo, woof, meow.”

Strategies to Improve Expressive Language

Parallel Talk

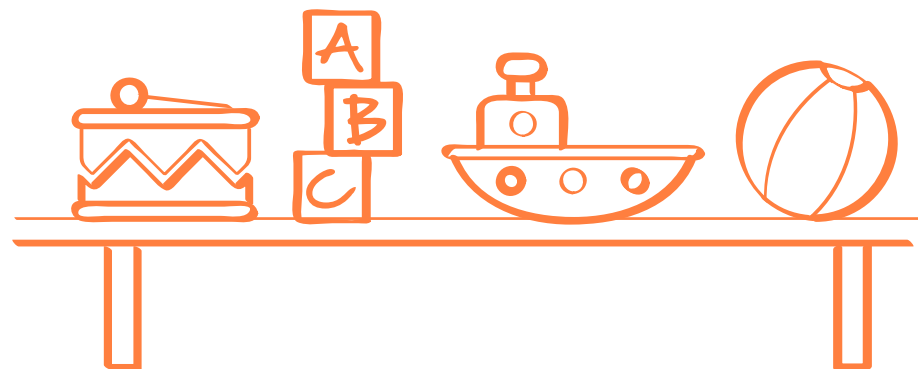
When you are playing with your child or your child is eating, bathing, etc. talk to him about what he is doing. For example: "You are building a big tower," or, "You stacked five blocks! Uh oh, one fell down," or, "You are eating a fruit."

Paraphrase

- Use simple language with toddlers instead of lengthy explanations or directions.
- Do not say: "You need to put on your coat because it's cold outside and we're going to Grandma's house"
- Instead, say "Put on your coat."
- Using simpler language when asking children to complete a task or follow a direction works best.

Picture Communication

You can use pictures of objects and activities so your child can point to objects he wants. For example: make your child a communication book of daily routines by using pictures placed into a small photo album. You could also cut out pictures of foods from a magazine and stick a velcro on the back so he can make choices by handing the picture to you.

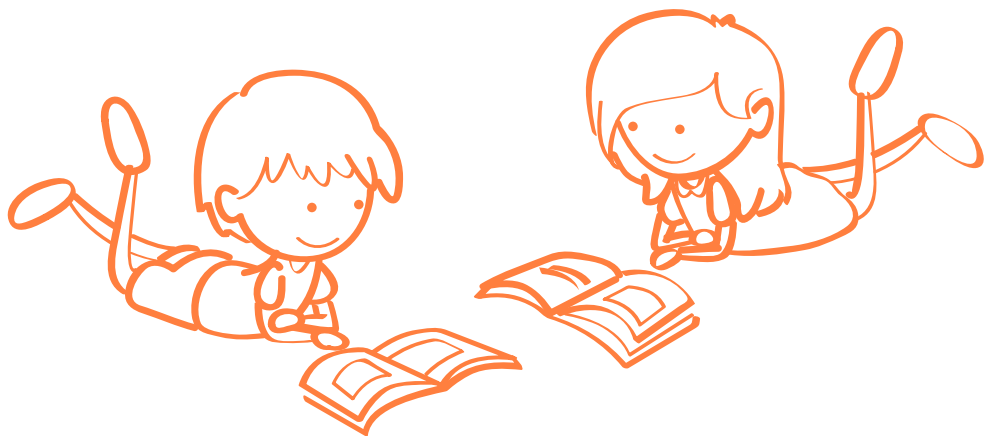


Place Things Out of the Child's Reach

Instead of always having your child's things on the table, put it within your child's sight, but out of his reach. When he wants it, he will have to gesture or verbalize. You can do the same with his favourite toys.

Activities for Building Expressive Language

Expressive language can be elicited in a number of different ways. Most of the toys or activities you already have in your home can help your child begin to talk more and practise expressive language skills.



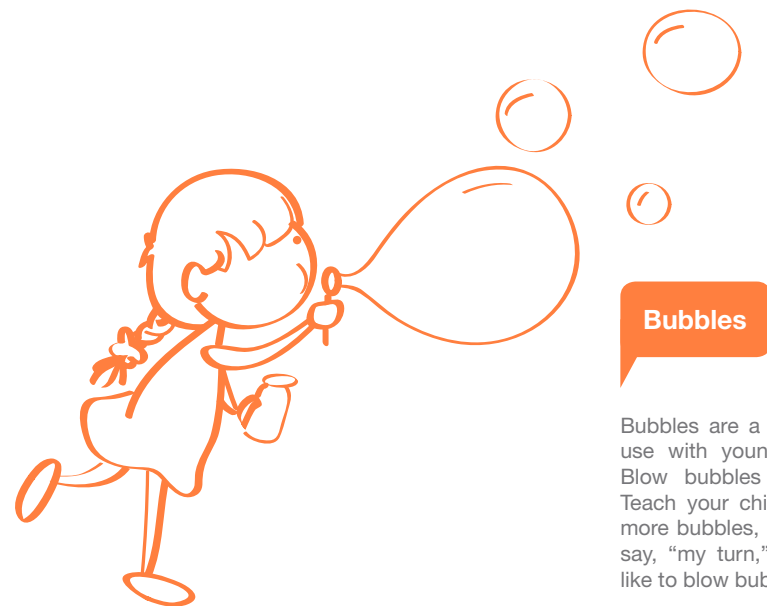
Wordless Books

Wordless books are great for young children who are working on developing expressive language skills. With young children, you can ask them direct questions like, "What is this?" or "What color is this?"

You can expand upon your child's answers by saying things like, "You're right; that's a cat. He's a black cat." This will help model language and provide good input as well as working on output.

Books with Simple Text

Books with simple text are a great way to elicit expressive language in children with emerging language. The important thing to remember when reading books with your child is to ask OPEN-ENDED questions. Ask them a question where they generate their own answers. For example: "What is she doing?", or "How is he feeling?" Avoid questions with one-word answers.



Bubbles

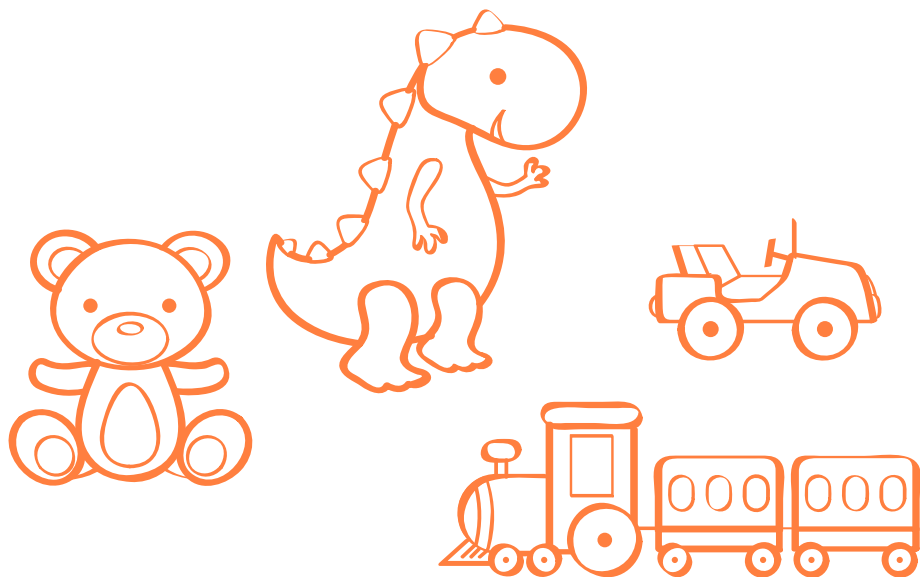
Bubbles are a great tool to use with younger children. Blow bubbles and pause. Teach your child to ask for more bubbles, or get him to say, "my turn," if he would like to blow bubbles too.

Playdough

- Playdough can be used to build scenery, animals, food or any number of creations. Allow your child to express what they want to create or what they want you to build. Cookie cutters or other moulds can help children if they are having trouble utilising their imagination to build with playdough.
- This is a great opportunity to have your child request more or different playdough by using an, "I want...." or an "I need..." phrase.



Activities for Building Expressive Language



Toy Animals

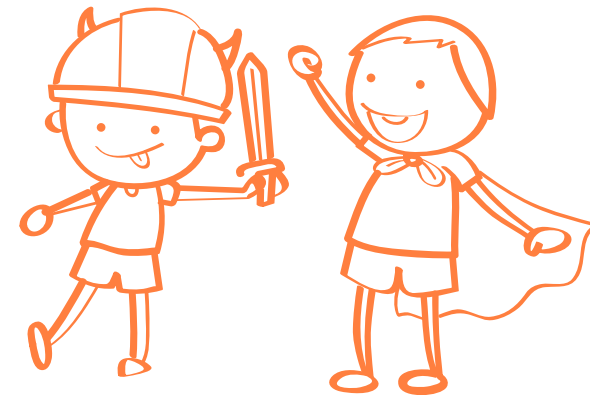
Toy animals can be used for pretend play. Again, be sure to ask open-ended questions. This is also another opportunity to have your child utilise “I want...” or “I need...” phrases. Ask your child to narrate or describe the activity and animals.

Train Sets or Cars

Cars and trains can be used in a similar manner that toy animals would be used. Cars or trains sometimes come with tracks or ramps. If you don't have ramps, you can improvise by using a table or another piece of furniture. You can utilise these tracks or ramps to have your child verbalise “go again” or “go up/down” or “ready...set...go”.

Dress Up

Dress up can be incorporated into pretend play or an entire activity in itself. You can have your child express what they want to wear or what they want you to wear. Ask open-ended or imaginative questions such as, “Where should we go now that we're all dressed up?” or “Who are we?”



Play Food

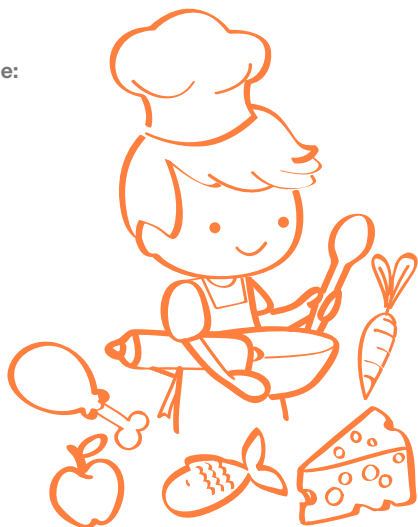
- Your child can pretend they are cooking and/or serving you food. Have them ask you what you'd like to eat, or express what they are cooking and how, and to whom they are serving it to.
- You can also use a puppet with pretend food with the younger children. Have the children feed the puppet and tell it, “Eat the banana” or “Eat the apple puppet”. You can engage them by pretending to either enjoy or dislike the food in an exaggerated manner.



Expressive Language Plan your activities! (sample)

Choose an activity/game/routine:

Pretend play toys of food



My child will:
(your goals for your child)

- Let me play along with him for 5 minutes
- Imitate few sounds/words during the play

I will help my child do this by:
(strategies that you plan to use)

- Making the activity interesting to him by feeding a puppet
- Offering a choice of what food item he wants next

Responses from my child:
(make a note of how your child is responding)

Date	Response from my child

Expressive Language Plan your activities!

Choose an activity/game/routine:

My child will:
(your goals for your child)

I will help my child do this by:
(strategies that you plan to use)

Responses from my child:
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Promoting Communication Within Your Daily Routines



Waking Up

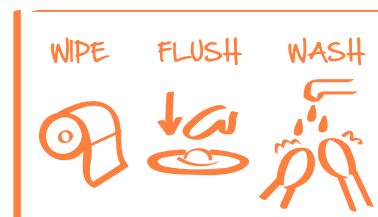
One of the best things you can do for your child is start his day off on a positive note. When you go to wake your child up, be gentle and loving instead of rushed and frustrated. Make sure you let your child know how much you love him and tell him it would be a great day! Starting off on the right foot will help anyone's day!

Going to the Bathroom, Brushing Teeth



Sequencing/Following Directions:

- You can work on sequencing and following directions while completing toileting and teeth brushing routines.
- For younger children, give them one or two verbal directions at a time, like “pull down your pants” or “put on toothpaste, then put in mouth.”
- Alternatively, create picture directions of all of the steps that your child needs to complete that task. Post the directions at the location that the task is to be completed. Look at the following diagram as an example:



- For older children, directions may be written down without pictures. This will help improve your child's reading skills as well as learning how to follow written directions with a task that they are probably already pretty familiar.

Getting Dressed

Requesting Clothes: For children that are working on requesting, have your child request the various items of clothing he wants. You could have him ask particular colours or styles of clothing as well. Just make sure he uses his words!

Talk about the Day's Events:

If you are doing something special today, talk about what types of clothes would be appropriate for that event. For example: “if you're going swimming, what should you wear?”

Talk about the Weather

Talk about what the forecast is for today. You can even have your child help you look it up. After you find out, talk about what clothes would be appropriate for that type of weather.



Promoting Communication Within Your Daily Routines

Violate your Child's Expectations

One great way to get kids talking is by messing something up in your morning routine so he has to correct you. For example, give him his cereal bowl with milk but 'forget' to give him a spoon, or give him a fork instead. You could also put cereal on a plate instead of a bowl. Think of ways to throw your child off. When he looks confused, play dumb for a while until he is able to use his words and tells you what he needs instead.

Label Vocabulary, Describe, and Express Function

Talk about what the foods your child is eating are called. You can talk about how the foods taste, smell, feel, etc. You can also talk about the function of the foods and drinks: "What do we do with cereal? Eat it. What do we do with juice? Drink it." You could also do the same thing for the dishes and other things at the table that are used during breakfast.

Making Plans

While your child is eating breakfast, ask her about her day. What things does she know will happen? What things does she hope will happen? You can fill her in on after-school activities that she may have forgotten about.



Getting Ready for the Day

Talk about all of the things that will happen in your child's day. Talk about what will happen first, next, and last. Then, talk about all of the things your child will need for each of those activities. If your child is going to school, talk about what school supplies or books he needs. For older children, go through each class and talk about what he will need. This will help him when he gets to each class because he will have already thought about what he needs and will be able to get out those things. If it is not a school day, talk about what you will need for various activities you are doing that day.

Saying Goodbye

Be sure to start your child's day off right by giving your child a loving goodbye and telling your child that you know he or she is going to have a great day. Point out something good you have heard about from past days that you want to encourage. For example, tell your child: "I'm so proud that you were a good listener at school yesterday. I know you're going to do a great job today as well!"

Give your child any pre-corrects that you think she may need. A pre-correct is when you discuss a desired behaviour before it happens to avoid bad behaviours. For example, if your child always has trouble on the school bus, talk about what good school bus behaviour looks like. Try to frame things positively.

Visiting Public Places

You can encourage speech and language stimulation outdoors too.

For example, shopping with your child can be fun as well as helpful in expanding a child's vocabulary and understanding. While shopping, you can give them directions to follow, encourage labelling items, discuss what you will buy, how many you need, and what you will make. You can also discuss the size, shape and weight of the packages.

Similarly when you go for outdoor activities you can build your child's language in the form of fun and play activities. You can always take pictures of activities your child is enjoying and can encourage him to talk about it after you return back to home.



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Nearest MRT station

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358 from Pasir Ris Bus Interchange (West Loop Bus). Alight at bus stop B77249 along Pasir Ris Drive 1, which is opposite our Centre.

39, 53, 81, 89, 109, 518, 518A (from Pasir Ris Drive 1, in the direction of Elias Road). Alight at bus stop B77241 (after ESSO Petrol Station). One minute walk from bus stop to Centre.

