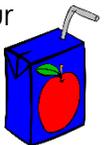


Helping your child improve communication skills

Provided below, is a list of ideas for you to help your child further develop his/her understanding and speaking abilities. Try one or two ideas and use them for a week at a time. Observe your child's response. Do not give up if the idea does not work after the first try. These suggestions are intended to make communication with your child fun and enjoyable. Your child should not feel pressured to talk or repeat words.



- **Communication is developed through interactions between two people. Be aware of all the little opportunities you have throughout the day to interact with your child.** Use everyday activities to do this (e.g. child's play time, bath time, putting on shoes, having a snack, wiping a face, sharing a book, etc.). Follow your child's lead and join in activities they like to do. Share time and activities together.
- **Observe your child.** Be aware of all their little attempts to communicate. It may be pointing, looking at something, pulling you to an object, making sounds, etc. When does he try to communicate? What does she try to communicate about? Accept and respond to all your child's communication attempts.
- **Try to be at your child's physical level so that you and your child can see each other's faces.** It is important that your child can see your eyes and especially your mouth.
- **Ask yourself, "if my child could say one word at this time, what would it be?"** Interpret and model that word for your child (e.g. open, come up, fall down, fall, kiss, etc.)
- **Simplify your language to that of your child's level.** If your child is pointing and making sounds, model one word at a time. If your child is using single words, model one and two word phrases (e.g. car go, daddy work, drink juice, etc.) This increases the chance your child will try to repeat what you have said. As your child's vocabulary begins to grow, add a word to what they say (e.g. shoe → shoe on → put shoe on → mommy put shoe on, etc.)
- **Describe what your child is doing.** Comment on their daily activities, movement, expressions, etc. Use simple words. Talk about what you are doing so your child is hearing language and your voice through the day.
- **Wait. Give your child a chance to send a message.** Model a word, Observe and wait (count to ten before you say the word again). Say the word again and then move on. Repeat, repeat, repeat!
- **Look for opportunities throughout the day to model a few key words.** (e.g. getting dressed, snack time, bath time, etc.) Select a small set of words that would be meaningful to your child that you will try to model often. (e.g. open/close, up/down, juice, cookie, hat, go, etc.)
- **Use lots of facial expressions and animation in your voice.**
- **Avoid a lot of questions and commands.** This tends to encourage only yes/no responses from your child. Give your child lots of choices (e.g. milk or water, big truck or little truck, etc.) which allows you to model a word.
- **Use gestures to encourage motor imitation and to help your child understand.** (e.g. come, "shh", up)
- **Create situations that encourage your child to communicate.** Put a toy out of reach. Hide one shoe and then look for it together. Give your child cereal without a spoon or milk. Give your child only a few crackers, apple slices or just a small amount to drink at a time. Do something unexpected (e.g. try to put a sock on their hand).
- **Give your child lots of praise and encouragement.** This can be with words (e.g. Yeah! Good job!) or actions (e.g. hug, pat on the head, smile).
- **You may wish to keep a diary of what your child says and does.** This will allow you to see the progress that your child is making.



- **Limit the amount of television that your child watches. This includes videos/DVDs, computer use, video games, etc.** Your child needs opportunities for sharing and interacting with real people. If your child is watching television or on the computer, it is best when this is a shared activity with you; singing the songs together, talking about the show, etc.
- **Play and share time with your child.** Play is social and fun and helps your child learn language in a natural way. It encourages turn-taking and is easy to respond to, even without words (e.g. clapping, hopping). Play is repetitive and integrates all of the senses. Play 'give and take' games such as rolling the ball, stacking blocks, doing a puzzle, etc.

Activities to encourage communication



- **Books, books, books!** Share books with your child daily. Look at the pictures. Label pictures and point to pictures.
- **Share interactive games such as peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, tickle games, hide and seek, etc.**
- **Sing songs together and share nursery rhymes.** Do the associated actions. Encourage your child to say the last word or part of a phrase by looking and waiting for them to finish the songs (e.g. "The itsy, bitsy spider went..." "up!")
- **Blow bubbles with your child.** After two or three turns, put the lid on the bottle tightly. Give the bottle to your child and wait for a response. This allows you to model words such as help, open, more, bubble, pop.
- **Play with fun sounds and words** (e.g. blowing raspberries, slicking your tongue, blowing bubbles, lip smacking, popping cheeks, moo, woof-woof, shhh, mmmm, yuck, uh-oh, wee, etc.).
- **Take a walk and talk about what you see.**
- **Share creative activities** (e.g. colouring, painting, play dough, gluing, building with blocks, finger painting, pudding painting, etc.).

