

Top techniques to develop your child's speech and language



Northern Sydney
Local Health District



Get your child's attention first

Get down to your child's level and get their attention before speaking or asking a question. Young children find it difficult to listen if they are busy with a game or activity. Saying their name first encourages them to stop, look and listen.



Give your child time to respond

Children often need time to put their thoughts together before answering. Give your child longer to respond than you would with an adult. Make sure you pause to give your child time to respond and maintain eye contact as you wait for them to take their turn.



Use more comments than questions

Asking too many questions can stop the flow of conversation. Try making a comment instead to focus on teaching (not testing) your child (e.g. 'Wow that's a big red bus' instead of asking 'What colour is the bus?'). If you do ask your child a question, try questions that keep the conversation going (e.g. Where is the bear going?) rather than questions that only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer (e.g. Did the bear go in the cave?).

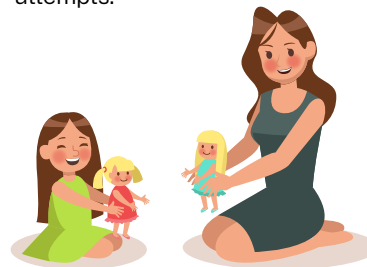
Expand on what your child says to you

Add a couple of words to your child's sentence. For example, if your child says 'Look, a truck', you could say 'Yes, a noisy garbage truck'. By doing this, you'll be showing that you've heard what they've said and are demonstrating the next stage of language development.



Use gesture and facial expression

Speak in a lively, animated voice. Use gesture and facial expression to match your words. Gesture supports children's language development. By using gesture, you'll give your child more clues about what your words mean. If they copy the gesture to express themselves, respond to their attempts.



Encourage copying

Children learn through copying. Copying your child's sounds and words can be an effective way to get your child's attention. This may in turn encourage them to copy your sounds and words.



Take turns in a conversation

Encourage back and forth conversations. Talk about what your child is interested in and then wait for them to take a turn. Your child's turn may be a look, gesture, sound or word. Once your child has had their turn continue the conversation.



Use simple repetitive language

Keep sentences short. Describe your everyday activities with simple grammatically correct sentences. As you talk about what you are doing, say your words slowly and clearly (e.g. 'I'm washing the cup. Now the cup is clean').



Demonstrate the correct way to say words and sentences

Praise your child's efforts to talk. If your child makes a mistake in a word or sentence, just say it correctly back to them rather than pointing out the mistake (e.g. if your child says 'I goed to the park', you might say 'Yes, you went to the park'). Do not ask your child to repeat the sentence.



Sing songs and rhymes

Make learning new vocabulary fun and memorable through music. Sing songs with your child and add actions, such as Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Open Shut Them and Wheels on the Bus. You could also make up your own songs.