

## Make Language a Priority

- Speak and interact face-to-face
- Have lots of back-and-forth conversations with your children
- Use different types of words: describing words, doing words, location words (behind, under), social words / phrases (how are you?) and different types of questions (e.g. where? who?), not just naming words.
- Exaggerate or emphasise new words through changing your pitch, rate of talking (slower talk) or loudness, through animation, or repetition.
- Support your language through gesturing (e.g. point to) or miming (e.g. brushing action for brushing hair) when you are talking.
- Take time to really listen and understand and respond to what your child is saying while still staying on the same topic.
- Extend on what they are saying e.g. The child might say, "Big dog" You might say "The big fluffy dog is running."
- Switch off all media devices when not in use as they will distract a child from engaging in conversations with you.
- NO media device, NO educational program teaches communication skills. It might teach some vocabulary; but the skills that are needed to have a conversation with others are learnt in the context of a conversation. NO media device yet has the ability to have a meaningful conversation with a child!
- Ensure your interactions with your child are as positive and sensitive as possible
- Play with your child - especially pretend play of real-life situations (e.g. cooking, tea parties, caring for a baby). Make sure you let them lead and comment on what they are doing so they can have language around the activities. To do this you must be watchful and observant. Slowly introduce new concepts to them and repeat it until they seem to have learn it.
- Read books for at least 20 minutes per day. If your child is not able to sit with you that long - start small and work up. Maybe the first time it is one page, the next time it is two pages. Make the book as exciting as possible by bringing it alive. You can bounce or rock your child (if those actions are in the book) or pretending that the spider in the book is crawling up their arm (with your hand being the spider)
- Explore the books you read. It's quality, not quantity of books that matters. Ask them questions about what they think the book might be about before you even turn the cover. Ask them what you think might happen next before you turn the pages. Ask what's happening on the pages. Ask them where the characters are. (The tendency with some people is to get children to name everything on the page. While naming words are important, it is equally important to have the other types of words as well).
- It's ok to read the same book many times over. Start leaving out the last word, and then the last few words in the sentences. Eventually you may have the child say all of the words of all the sentences in the book.
- Sing nursery rhymes, the alphabet, and do activities that teach numbers.

## Specific Ideas for Language Stimulation

from Let's Talk 2-4 Parent Manual

### Technique: Modelling

To learn new words, a child needs to hear the words first. Parents and caretakers are the people who set examples for their children. It is important that adults provide appropriate and clear models/examples for

children (see examples below). Modelling can be used for naming objects, requesting items, commenting on actions and any type of language.

The following are examples but it is important to remember that the words you use should be simpler for a younger child:

### **1. Modelling everyday language**

A parent may model to their child ways to ask for something.

Child: Points to drink bottle.

Parent: "Can I please have my drink bottle?" (for an older child) or "drink bottle?" (for a younger child). The parent then gives the child the drink bottle. The child is not expected to copy straight away and the item they want should be given to them even if they don't try to copy.

Your child is not expected to copy exactly what you say, however, setting a good example of correct language for your child can give them exposure to new language.

### **2. Modelling Stories (making up stories and reading books)**

The ability to understand stories, and create stories is of great importance before a child learns to read and write (the stage before a child can read and write is called pre-literacy skills).

Reading books to your child is a great way to help develop your child's pre-literacy skills. When you are reading a book, encourage your child to listen carefully, and reduce distractions (e.g. music, television). When you are reading the book ask your child questions about pictures and events. Allow your child to talk freely about what is happening in the book.

Tell your child your own stories. These stories can be about your day, when you were a young child or made up stories.

Allow your child to make up their own stories. Think of characters, funny things that can happen in the story, and draw pictures to go along with the story.

*Why use modelling?* The use of modelling can assist children by giving them an appropriate demonstration of how to show they understand language and also use it. It will encourage the child to produce the words modelled to them after they have heard them used several times.

### **Technique: Parantese**

When adults are speaking to young children, they use different words, and say words in a different way. This way of speaking can be called motherese, which is also becoming known as 'parentese'. Changes that are usually made include using:

- A high pitch voice.
- A slow speed at which words are said.
- Simple words.
- Shorter sentences.
- More talking about what is happening here and now.
- Clear sounds.

*Why use Motherese?* Motherese can help your child develop their own language.

### Technique: Recasting

This technique can be used when your child makes an error while speaking. It allows you to respond to your child and provide them with the correct way of saying what they want to say.

Child: Dog is eat

Adult: Yes! The dog is eating

Do not point out errors your child makes, as this may make them feel uncomfortable about talking with a fear of getting things wrong. Instead, just say what they tried to say the correct way, using a conversational rather than corrective tone of voice.<sup>6</sup>

*Why use Recasting?* Recasting will help encourage your child to build their language and see talking and listening to others as a positive experience.

### Technique: Self talk and Parallel talk

This is used when you are alongside your child, doing the same type of activity, e.g. sitting at the table together and colouring in.

In **self talk**, you describe the actions you are doing, using words to explain what you are doing, e.g. if you are colouring in a picture, you might say "I am colouring; I am colouring in my picture."

When using **parallel talk**, use your words to describe what a child is doing in their activity, e.g. "You are colouring. You are colouring in the tree."

*Why use Self talk and Parallel talk?* Self talk and parallel talk are useful as they provide a good example and clear link between actions and words, while having fun playing.

### Technique: Forced choices

This technique involves giving your child choices. When you ask your child questions, it can help to give them a choice of potential answers, rather than asking them a yes/no question. This will help them to have a go at saying one of the words by showing them how to answer the question.

For example,

Adult: Which would you like, a banana or an apple?

Child: Apple

In this example the child is encouraged to use the language the adult has presented: apple or banana.

*Why use Forced choices?* By giving your child options to choose from you are giving them a good example of the word that is appropriate for answering the question. It is also helpful as it makes your child feel good about answering the question appropriately.

### Technique: Expansions

It is very helpful to extend on what your child has said by adding a little more information. The expansion technique allows you to add more detail to your child's sentence and correct their mistakes. It has been found that by expanding what your child says, it is likely that they will attempt to copy the expansion. Eg. If your child puts their teddy in a toy car and says "teddy" or "teddy car", you could expand this to "Yes, teddy is driving the car".

*Why use Expansions?* This technique will give your child lots of information about how to put words together in the right way.

### Technique: Repetition

Repetition involves using the same words both in different sentences and different situations. The easiest way to use repetition when a child is that age is to use the name of an object in a number of short sentences for as long as their interest is focused on it. For example, as the child picks up and plays with a ball, you could say, "It's a ball. It's your ball. The ball is rolling."

We should strive to say the same thing the same way over and over and over. In this way we can give children the opportunity to add it to their everyday language.

*Why use Repetition?* Repetition is important in helping your child to increase their understanding of the meaning of individual words, and allows them to hear the words many times so that eventually they will be able to use them accurately.

It is also very important for your child's learning to hear words in many different contexts, discovering, for example, that their hat is always called 'hat' whether it be on their head, on the floor, or squashed up in their mother's handbag.

### **Technique: Modifying the environment**

This technique requires the parent to present the child with something they cannot do without their help. For example the parent might blow some bubbles and then put the lid back on the container so that the child cannot blow any more. In this situation the child would be expected to show the parent in some way (e.g. Grunt, talk, point) that they want them to blow more bubbles. This can be used when doing any task your child needs your help with (e.g. closed see-through containers with things inside, bubbles, wind-up toys etc). Some children will gesture or point to try and tell you what they want, encourage your child to use their words to tell you. You could also use something the wrong way on purpose (e.g. Brushing your hair with the back of the brush) so that your child has to tell you the right way to do it. Similarly, you could give your child a fork to eat their cereal with instead of a spoon and see what they do.

*Why use Modifying the environment?* When playing games or doing tasks that your child needs your assistance for, or by not carrying out the actions required to make an object work, you are encouraging your child to use their words to tell you what they want.

For more ideas, refer to please refer to 'Helpful Tips for Parents' page and 'Let's Talk 2 to 4' video accessible at: [www.letstalk2to4.com](http://www.letstalk2to4.com)