

Things Parents Can Do to Stimulate Language Development

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Early Years

- ▽ Verbally respond to your baby's vocalizations.
- ▽ Talk to your baby.
- ▽ Read to your baby.
- ▽ Around six months of age, use shared attention (e.g., eye contact alternating between child/parent and object) and sign language and/or gestures.
- ▽ Point to and name things in their field of view.
- ▽ Use an exaggerated voice and exaggerated facial expressions when you describe things.
- ▽ Use people words, action words, and feeling words (e.g., "Mommy is drinking juice. It tastes yummy!").
- ▽ Sing to your baby.
- ▽ Have older siblings help make up songs.
- ▽ Use songs to communicate things such as time to go to bed, time to clean up, etc.
- ▽ Make up songs that are silly or that communicate affirmations related to their positive qualities.
- ▽ Use familiar phrases to help your child anticipate events (e.g., "Ready...Set...Go!").



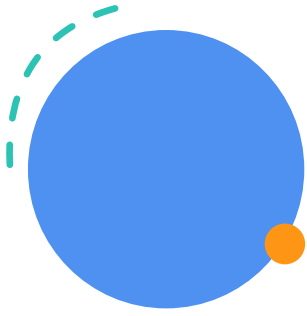


Older Toddler and Preschooler



- ▽ Initiate conversations with your child related to recent events (e.g., “Where did we go today?”).
- ▽ Verbally describe what your children are doing (e.g., “You are eating cereal. Yummy!”).
- ▽ Verbally narrate or explain daily routines
- ▽ Make up stories along with your child where each of you contributes equally. This not only stimulates language, but thinking, creating, and a sense of humor. Gradually increase the complexity of grammar and vocabulary you use to communicate.
- ▽ Provide children with expanded information about events, as well as things they see and how they feel (e.g., “Do you see the plane too? It is flying high, isn’t it?”).
- ▽ Read interactively to engage their participation. Ask questions, use dramatic inflections, let them guess what will happen next, point to pictures and describe them, and ask your child to do the same.
- ▽ Visit new places to enrich vocabulary (e.g., museums, parks, grocery stores). Talk to your child about objects that are round or blue. Talk to them about objects that have leaves or seeds.
- ▽ Avoid using vague words (e.g., stuff, thing). Instead, expose your child to varied vocabulary (e.g., hungry, starving, ravenous) to label an item or concept.
- ▽ Ask questions about novel vocabulary (e.g., What else is *fragile*?)





School Age and Beyond



- ▽ Continue with the strategies previously listed for preschoolers and toddlers.
- ▽ Keep the conversations going.
- ▽ Have family meetings.
- ▽ Have dinner together at the table and encourage conversation. Share “highs” and “lows”. Have each family member sharing one thing that went wrong (low) and one thing that well (high) during the day.
- ▽ When you go out to dinner, keep electronic devices at home or turned off. After seeing a movie or TV show together, talk about what happened.
- ▽ Encourage reading. When they finish a book, ask about their thoughts and feelings.

