

Developing Your Child's Language Skills

1. **Read to your child as often as possible.** Talk about the pictures and situations in the stories. Many children enjoy drawing a picture about the story, and then describing it to you. Encourage your child to retell familiar stories, and describe the events, actions, and characters that you have read about. As you discuss the stories, ask "wh" questions (why, who, when, where, what) using the language level appropriate for your child.
2. **Talk to your child.** Help your child learn new words by using them yourself. Model simple, grammatically correct sentences for your child so he or she can hear new parts of speech. Describe the activities you are doing and name the items you are using to complete the activities. Your child can learn a lot of new vocabulary words by listening to you describe daily routines at home.
3. **Describe Objects.** Teach your child how to describe and categorize objects by using words that tell function, size, color, shape and texture. This can be a fun activity during trips to the grocery store or shopping center. Take a few minutes and describe features and functions of some of the items found in a section of the store. The produce section is a good place to start. Compare one or two of the fruits found there. Tasting them later at home can be a fun, and delicious, way to finish the lesson!
4. **Share a memory.** Talking about past, present, or future events can build vocabulary and describing skills. Many children especially enjoy looking through their baby books or photo albums and hearing stories about family life.
5. **Take a field trip.** Visit the local zoo, library, fire station, farm, museum, park, or ice cream store. Taking your child to these places can greatly enrich their vocabulary. Remember to talk about all the things you see, taste, hear, and touch. Some children enjoy keeping a field trip notebook. Drawing pictures of the places you visit helps them discuss the things you saw there.
6. **Bake a cake.** Cooking activities give your child the opportunity to learn about action words, ingredients, names of utensils, and sequencing skills. Describe what you are doing, or comment on your child's actions (stirring, pouring, baking, mixing). Allow your child to taste, smell, and describe the foods you are preparing. Use texture words (crunchy), color words (red), size words (smallest) and opposite words (hot/cold, empty/full) while cooking.

7. **Play.** Children can learn many vocabulary words while playing. Sit on the floor next to your child and play with some of his or her toys. Use simple sentences to talk about your actions while playing. ("Push the car. Here's a big red bus. Drive on the road!") Keep your descriptions simple, but keep talking. If your child adds a comment, you can repeat or expand on it. (child: "bus", Parent: "Yes, it's a blue bus.")
8. **Ride in the car.** Talk about where you are going and why. Comment on sights and sounds (fire engines, shopping center, sirens). Ask your child to name things he/she sees. Name the different parts of the car and their functions.
9. **Sing.** Sing songs together, or recite nursery rhymes. Cassette tapes of kid's songs are fun to sign along with in the car. Songs with hand motions can be especially language enriching.
10. **Be positive.** Encourage your child's language attempts. Allow plenty of time for him or her to respond to your questions. If a mistake is made, you can correct it by repeating the sentence, as it should have been said, without asking your child to say it again. (Child: "I puts my socks on my foots." Parent: "Yes...you put your socks on your feet.") This method promotes your child's language skills in a positive and encouraging manner, while reinforcing correct vocabulary and sentence structure.
11. **Listen.**
 - Listen for and name sounds around the house (doorbell ringing, water running).
 - Play "Simon Says" games that involve listening to directions.
 - Reduce background noise while you are listening to your child talk. Turn off the television and get on his or her eye level. Allow your child plenty of time to talk to you. Ask questions and request more information.
 - Listen carefully when your child asks a question. Make sure to model new vocabulary words, while answering in complete sentences.
 - Watch out for ear infections. Some children are prone to frequent ear infections which may result in reduced hearing ability. Remember, Good hearing is essential to language development.