

Conversational Strategies for Promoting Speech and Language Development in Infants and Toddlers

1. Give detailed descriptions of what you are doing.

Example: “Mommy is making you a snack. Today, you get to eat a banana. (Show the banana to the baby.) I am peeling the yellow banana. (Demonstrate peeling the banana.) Inside it is white. It smells very yummy. Now I am cutting the banana into small pieces to make it easier to mash with a fork....”

2. Be a commentator of what your child is doing.

Example: “You like watching the dog play outside.” “That tower you are building is getting taller and taller.” “Noah threw the ball and Snowball, the wonder dog, chased it and brought it back to Noah. Noah picks up the ball and throws it again.”

3. Remember, you are your child’s role model. Demonstrate by your actions and words. Use correct grammar when speaking to your child. It is not necessary to correct your child’s grammar, instead repeat it back correctly.

Example: To your neighbor say, “Good Morning, Mr. Moore.” Then say to your child, “Emma, say Good Morning, Mr. Moore.”

4. If you ask your child a question, be patient and give him 5 to 10 seconds to think and respond.

5. Expand on what your child says.

Example: Your child says, “Ball.” You say, “Yes, that is a big, blue ball. Would you like to throw the ball?” Your child says, “Juice.” You can respond by saying, “Juice please. Yes, you may have a drink of juice.” Hand the child a cup of juice and say, “Thank you.”

6. Use different words for the same object.

Example: Kitty – Cat, Puppy – Dog, Apple – Fruit, Bird - Chicken, Flower – Rose

Conversational Activities to Promote Language Development

1. Reading

- Make reading a part of your daily routine.
- Reading time is cuddle time.
- Choose books with colorful pictures.
- Find books that are tactile, easy to hold and contain common objects that are recognizable to your child.
- Allow your child to choose from several books which will be read.
- Read with expression.
- With young children, you do not have to read every word on the page.
- Purposeful interaction between the book, child, and you is important.
- Many times children request reading the same book over and over. Repetition is great for building vocabulary.
- Pop-up books are fun.
- “How to Get Toddlers to Sit and Read with You: Tips from a Speech Therapist”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki5jYbRcydU>

2. Music, Finger Plays, and Nursery Rhymes

3. **Games and board puzzles** can encourage language development, if adults are directly interacting with the child using one of the conversational strategies previously discussed.

4. **Observational walks** at the zoo, park, neighborhood, and your own yard provide opportunities to introduce new vocabulary.

5. Make sounds when playing.

- When playing with toy animals, imitate their sounds,
- When playing with a toy train, make a chuga – chuga, choo, choo.
- When playing with toy cars or trucks, make a vroom sound.

Talking Matters – Strategies for Encouraging Your Child’s Speech & Language Development in the Home (First Things First) by Tracy Kaplan (Certified Speech Language Pathologist and Clinical Assistant Professor at the Dept. of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at the University of Arizona
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bG2RvZVvL5A>

10 Ways to Promote the Language and Communication Skills of Infants and Toddlers <http://mtbt.fpg.unc.edu/more-baby-talk/10-ways-promote-language-and-communication-skills-infants-and-toddlers#sthash.tkX0piVA.dpuf>