

*Getting
Speech
Started*





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Getting Speech Started

Getting speech off to a good start is really getting language off to a good start. Speech is just the noises that we use to make words that stand for thoughts or ideas. Language has to do with planning what to say, deciding on what words to use, and then putting the words in the correct order, tense, etc. (grammar). Part of language also involves the ability of the listener to understand what is spoken (what is heard).

Sound complex? It really is, and what is even more remarkable is that most children master these skills by the time they are 5 years old. This pamphlet will show parents how to help their children along in their speech and language development. A variety of suggestions are listed for parents to follow as often as natural opportunities come up. Any child should benefit from the suggestions in this pamphlet, whether it is a child whose speech and language development is:

- normal;
- seems a bit slow;
- already identified as being behind.

The earlier children learn speech and language skills the sooner they can enjoy the riches of human communication. If parents become concerned they should ask their physician about having their child seen by a speech-language pathologist.

The Pre-Talker

Give Your Pre-Talker a Language Bath

From the time babies are born until they are about one year old they are “noise-makers” or “pre-talkers”. Even before children talk, parents can do many things to encourage speech and language development.

While babies might not need a bath every day to get them off to a good start, parents can give them a daily “language bath” to get their speech off to a good start.

How Do You Give a Language Bath?

Listed below are the ingredients of a language bath. Even when a baby is “brand new” and won’t understand things until later, the “bath” can and should be given. Anytime is a good time to bathe the baby and every suggestion can be used over and over again. The ones to use are the ones that seem most natural at the time.

- Name and show things over and over:
“This is a cup”, “See—this is a cup”.
“Here’s your bottle.”, etc.
- Say your child’s name often: “Hi Michael.”
“There’s my Susan.” “Is Peter sleepy?”
- Copy sounds and noises your baby makes and try to get him/her to copy your sounds too.

- Let your baby hear many different sounds and name them. “There’s the phone.” “Listen to the pretty music.” “Mommy’s going to vacuum the rug.” “There’s the doorbell. I wonder who’s there?”
- Play simple games which match movements with words like “pat-a-cake.”
- Talk to your baby as often as possible, even when your baby can’t see you.
- Explain what’s going on around your baby using single words or short phrases (always speak clearly and avoid “baby talk”).
- Give your baby noise-making toys like rattles or squeaky toys so that sounds become associated with fun and pleasure.
- Label the motions or movements your baby makes. When your baby waves—“Are you waving good-bye?” When puckering lips—“Do you want a kiss?”
- Smile or nod when your baby makes a sound or noise.

Opportunities: bathing (a “real” bath, with water), dressing, feeding, changing, playing, reading, trips, walks—**anytime at all!**

The Talker

Here are three general suggestions for encouraging continued speech and language development once the child has begun to talk:

- be a good speech model;
- copy your child's speech;
- encourage your child's speech.

When using the suggestions given in the following sections, remember that anytime that seems natural is a good time, and the more often the better!

Be a Good Speech Model

When a child is using one or two word phrases a good speech model talks to the child in three and four word phrases or simple sentences.

Describe what you are doing:

- "Water's all gone."
- "Mommy's cooking."
- "Daddy has ice cream."

Describe what your child is doing, feeling, or hearing:

- Child waves—"Hi."
- Child laughs—"You're happy."

Talk about objects:

- "Big ball." "See the big ball."
- "Bounce ball." "Throw ball."

Remember that a good speech model will talk just above the child's level (not at an adult level, but also not "baby talk").

Copy Your Child's Speech

Repeat what your child says:

- Child: "Mommy go."
Parent: "Yes, Mommy go."

This lets your child compare what he/she said to how you say it. It also shows that you're really listening.

Repeat what your child says but make it sound closer to adult levels.

If your child does not yet put 2 words together:

- Child: "milk"
Parent: "more milk" or "want milk"
- Child: "boy go"
Parent: "boy going"
- Child: "boy going"
Parent: "boy is going"

You can also correct sounds that aren't made properly by emphasizing the sounds you want to draw your child's attention to.

If your child says the "t" sound for the "k" sound

- Child: "I see a tite" (kite)
Parent: "I see the kite too"

Do not force your child to repeat the sounds, words, or sentence correctly, but give lots of praise if he/she tries.

Encourage Your Child's Speech

It is important to encourage your talkers to speak often, even if you are busy doing something else! As talkers become more and more skillful, encouragement should also be given for how well they speak.



Encouragement can be:

- Praising—"You're a good talker!"
- Smiling, nodding, hugging.
- Showing that you are listening by commenting on what your child has said:
Child: "I went to the zoo."
Parent: "I bet you saw a monkey there."
- Showing that you are interested in what your child has to say:
Child: "I saw a bunny"
Parent: "Oh, neat! Tell me more."
- Looking directly at your child with eye to eye contact while he/she is talking.

References

References About Speech and Language Development and Stimulation

- 1 *Let's Talk About Talking.* (A companion pamphlet to *Getting Speech Started.*) Capital Health, Community Health Services, Speech and Language Services.
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- 3 *Teach Your Child to Talk—A Parent Guide.*
By Dr. David Pushaw, MacMillan of Canada,
70 Bond Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1X3
- 4 *Your Child's Speech and Language—Guidelines for Parents.* By M. Brooks and D. Engmann,
H & H Enterprises, Box 1070, Lawrence,
Kansas, USA 66044



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