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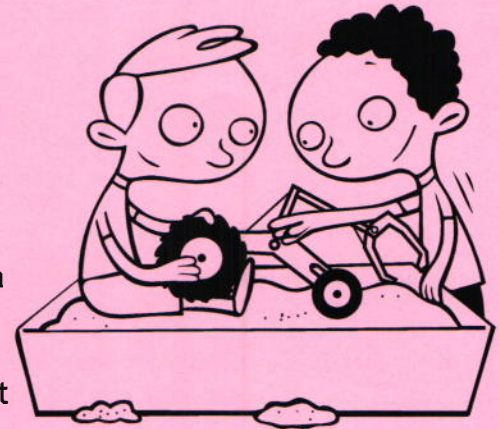
Number 415



Let's Play! Tips for Organizing Play Time for Young Children

By Erica M. Zollman, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

Playing and learning go hand-in-hand, as play provides a natural context for children to practice and reinforce essential skills. Children learn a wide variety of skills during play including cognitive, physical, language, social, and literacy skills. Parents can help facilitate play and learning by arranging playdates for their children. Here are some tips to help your child's next playdate go smoothly.



- **Set your child up for success.** When arranging a playdate, carefully consider the characteristics of a potential playmate, ensuring that the playmate is around the same age as your child and has similar interests. As children become older, they can select classmates or peers that they wish to play with. Additionally, it is beneficial to schedule playdates around your child's sleeping and eating routines.
- **Practice difficult skills.** Review expectations of behavior and practice skills that may be difficult for your child. For example, if your child struggles with sharing, role-play how to share prior to the playdate.
- **Provide structure.** Be sure to set a time limit for the playdate that is appropriate for your child. Make a list of activities, and allow children to take turns choosing ones they will enjoy. Choose activities or toys that promote social interaction and cognitive development, such as board games, puppets or blocks. You may also include toys that encourage pretend play, such as dolls, racecars, action figures, etc.
- **Review the rules.** Children succeed when they know what is expected of them. Review the rules with all children prior to playtime: behavioral expectations (e.g., no running in the house) and social expectations (e.g., take turns when playing with blocks).
- **Plan a snack break.** Try to include a snack or cooking activity. This is a great way to practice following directions, sequencing, asking/answering questions, turn taking, and social skills.

- **Get moving.** Incorporate physical activities during playdates. Go to a playground or park, or allow children to play in the yard under adult supervision.
- **Let children play.** At first, children may need a bit of adult support for a playdate. However, as they become more confident and comfortable, slowly fade adult support and allow them the opportunity to lead their playdate.

Remember that playdates can be fun for both children and parents. Helping your child develop appropriate play skills is critical to social development and sets your child up for success.

References:

Bongiorno, L. (n.d.). 10 things every parent should know about play. Retrieved December 18, 2015, from NAEYC for families website: <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/10-things-every-parent-should-know-about-play>

Guidelines for structured play dates with socially-challenged preschoolers [Pamphlet]. (2012). Linguisystems.

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Today's Play . . . Tomorrow's Success!

Today's play in early childhood is the best foundation for success in school. Play develops many skills that are necessary for children to learn to read and write for success in math and science. Play also develops behaviors that help children learn all school subjects. This chart shows the **skill that children are learning** as they play and the ways that these skills help children develop into better students. *This does not mean that preschoolers are ready to be taught to read and write.* It means that they are learning many of the things that will **lead to success in elementary school** by spending their time playing today.

Today's play <i>(examples of play)</i>	Helps preschool-age children learn	Leads to elementary school success
When children build with blocks, buildings, houses, cars, etc...	<p>They are learning spatial relationships – learning to judge distance, space and size.</p> <p>They are improving their visual memory – remembering what they see.</p> <p>They are learning to achieve a self-selected goal – completing their own projects.</p>	<p>Understanding spatial relationships helps children to succeed in math and science.</p> <p>Visual memory is needed for learning to read.</p> <p>Independent completion of tasks is very important for success in all school subjects.</p>
When children put blocks away onto labeled shelves...	They are learning to match, classify and sort by shape and size.	Matching, classifying and sorting are important underlying skills for many types of learning, especially math and science.
When children play with small interlocking blocks...	They are improving their small muscle control – picking up and moving objects.	Good small muscle control is needed for learning to write.
When children work a puzzle...	<p>They learn to stick to a job and complete it, and feel good about completing it.</p> <p>They are learning to make figure-ground discriminations – noticing the difference between the background and the picture.</p>	<p>Children who are persistent learners do better in all school subjects.</p> <p>Children need to make these type of distinctions to learn to recognize letters and to learn to read.</p>
When children string beads...	They are improving their eye-hand coordination – their ability to use their eyes and hands together.	Eye-hand coordination is needed for learning to write.
When children mix two colors of paint to make another color	They are developing an understanding of cause and effect.	The foundation for science education is real-life experience with cause and effect.

Today's play
(examples of play)

Helps preschool-age children learn

Leads to elementary school success

When children draw a picture of the sun...

They are learning to use pictures or symbols to represent their ideas.

Understanding that letters and words are symbols, and practice with using symbols is needed for children to learn to read and write.

When children pretend to write with markers and crayons...

They are learning directionality – the way that adults write across the page from left to right in English.

Understanding the directionality used in English gives children the background they need to make sense of reading and writing.

When children choose whatever they wish to do with art materials...

They are learning to make choices, to try out ideas, to plan and experiment.

Children who are independent learners and who can try out their own ideas are better learners in all school subjects.

When children play fireperson or adult roles...

They are developing perspective-taking skills – the ability to think about the way others act, think and feel, and develop empathy and feelings for others.

Children with perspective-taking skills understand that their teacher sees their work differently than they do. This skill is needed for children to make use of the feedback about their work from their teacher.

They are learning to use symbols to represent something else – a block can become a firetruck.

Learning to use symbols is what learning to read and write is all about.

When children play restaurant together or play grocery store together...

They are improving their language skills.

Language skills underlie all learning in school.

They are learning how to work together to overcome problems.

Problem-solving skills help children to learn in every school subject.

They are developing an understanding of social expectations and the attitude of others, and they develop the ability to anticipate how to act in real-life situations.

Children become better at figuring out what is expected of them, academically and socially.

When children play in water...

They are learning conservation of volume – that no matter what size or shape the container is, a specific amount of water will not change.

Conservation of volume is an important science concept.

They test, experiment and guess what will happen.

This is the same process scientists use in research.

When children play in wet and dry sand...

They observe first-hand the changes that water makes to sand, learning that combining things together can create new and different things.

Observing changes when things are combined is just like many types of scientific experiments.

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Children learn through play

Toys are fun, but toys are also tools that help children learn about themselves and the world around them. Play is critical to the healthy growth and development of children. As children play, they learn to solve problems, to get along with others and to develop the fine and gross motor skills needed to grow and learn. Hospital staff often use play as a means of providing therapy to children. Play helps a child do the following:

- **Develop physical skills.** Gross motor skills are developed as a child learns to reach, grasp, crawl, run, climb and balance. Fine motor skills are developed as children handle small toys.
- **Develop cognitive concepts.** Children learn to solve problems (What does this do? Does this puzzle piece fit here?) through play. Children also learn colors, numbers, size and shapes. They have the ability to enhance their memory skills as well as their attention span. Children move on to higher levels of thought as they play in a more stimulating environment.
- **Develop language skills.** Language develops as a child plays and interacts with others. This begins with parents playing cooing games with their children and advances to practical levels such as telling make-believe stories and jokes.
- **Develop social skills.** Learning to cooperate, negotiate, take turns and play by the rules are all-important skills learned in early games. These skills grow as the child plays. As a result, children learn the roles and rules of society.

As a parent, what is my role in play?

Parents are their children's first and best playmates. Parents have a role in being involved in their children's play. Children tend to be more creative when their parents are involved in their play. The best play occurs when the adult plays alongside the child, rather than just providing the toys or supervising. Becoming part of a child's play may take practice. Some parents feel that they need to give up "childish" things and "grow up." However, this is not true for parents. Some suggestions for joining your child's play include:

- **Observe.** Watch your child closely to learn what he or she can do and has problems doing. Also, be aware of your child's favorite activities.
- **Follow.** Join in and play with your child so that he or she knows you are interested in what he or she is doing. You can add to the complexity of the play; however, let your child be in control and determine the direction of play.
- **Be creative.** Let go of the adult idea that there is only one way to play with a toy. Use toys in different ways, and you will be amazed at how many different ways you can play with one toy. Being creative will make playing more fun for you and your child.

What toys are appropriate for my child?

Parents also have an important role in choosing good toys. Below are some suggestions for appropriate toys for children of various ages. Be aware of your child's interests and abilities. Not all children enjoy the same kinds of play.

Birth to 1 year old

A baby learns about his or her surroundings by using all five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch). A child this age is also learning cause and effect. Toys this age group may enjoy include:

- Mobiles and safety mirrors;
- Rattles;
- Stacking toys;
- Simple pop-up toys;
- Picture books;
- Musical toys, squeeze toys;
- Infant swings; and
- Teething toys.

1 to 3 years old

A toddler moves around in the environment a lot (walking, climbing, pushing, riding). A strong interest in manipulating and problem solving with objects begins during this period and can be encouraged with:

- Push-pull and ride-on toys;
- Small tricycles and wagons;
- Simple puzzles, shape sorters, peg boards;
- Movement games;
- Large beads;
- Blocks, stacking rings;
- Picture books; and
- Crayons, markers and clay.

3 to 5 years old

Preschoolers love to be around other children and enjoy sharing many kinds of activities, including:

- Dress-up with accessories;
- Puppets;
- Large bead-threading and lace sets;
- Storybooks;
- Simple board games (Hi-Ho Cherry-O, Candyland); and
- Puzzles (no more than 24 pieces)

6 to 9 years old

A school-age child seeks out new information, experiences and challenges in play. A child in this age group is influenced by peers and is extremely social. This age group may prefer group activity items such as:

- Sports equipment;
- Bicycle and helmet;
- Roller skates with protective gear;
- Books;
- Simple model and craft kits;
- Board games (Sorry, Trouble, Parcheesi, Checkers);
- Coordination or memory games (Jenga, Simon, Perfection, Mastermind); and
- Building and construction sets.

9 to 12 years old

A pre-teen is independent, yet thrives on play with other children. A child this age knows how to play fair using advanced social skills and will be able to manage:

- Books;
- Card and board games;
- Sports equipment;
- Art supplies;
- Model kits/science kits; and
- Jigsaw puzzles.

Tips on selecting toys

Children are just as prone to fads as adults are. Many of the trendy toys will be played with briefly and then pushed aside. Toys that have withstood the test of time are good choices, but many new toys and manufacturers should not be overlooked. The following are questions you should ask about toys before buying them.

- Is the toy appropriate for the child's age, skills and abilities?
- Will it hold the child's interests?
- Is the toy well-designed?
- Is it safe? Are there any potential hazards such as sharp edges, parts that can be swallowed or loose ties? Is it non-toxic? Does it meet Consumer Product Safety Standards?
- How durable is it? Will it take rough treatment?
- Is the toy appealing? Does it have long-lasting play value? Is it versatile?
- Does the toy stimulate creativity? The right products in arts, crafts, hobbies, language, reading, music, movement and drama can help to expand a child's imagination, thinking and comprehension.
- Will the product teach?
- Does it help expand positive self-esteem, values, understanding and cultural awareness? Does it help encourage the growth of self-esteem or values in the child?
- Does it offer practice in eye-hand coordination or fine and large motor skills?
- Does the toy help teach communication skills?
- Is the toy affordable? Does the price match the value received?
- Will the toy frustrate or challenge the child? Does the toy offer an opportunity to think, learn something new, practice or try something that will be beneficial? Or will it be too difficult for the child to use?
- Will the toy help to nurture childhood?
- Can the child use the product by him or herself? Will it help him or her gain independent skills?
- Does the product help the child express emotions, experience care and concern for others, practice positive social interaction? Is there any violence, sexism or negative aspects to the product?
- Is the toy fun? Most importantly, will the child enjoy using the toy? Will it make him or her laugh? Relax? Feel good? Play is after all a time to have fun.

For more information

If you have more questions about how children learn through play, speak with a Child Life Specialist at the hospital.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Understanding their own feelings helps children know how to express themselves and how to behave in difficult situations. Understanding the feelings of others helps children build strong friendships and learn fairness and compassion.

- **Set practical goals** for your child's social skills development. Limit your requests and be clear when you ask your child to act differently. For example, asking a child to keep his body still is clearer than asking him to be good. Plan social events at good times of the day for your child, and don't let them last too long. A hungry or tired child may behave poorly in a new situation that could otherwise be fun. Say clearly what happens if rules are not followed, and always follow through on any results you've stated.
- **Set daily routines** to help your child learn order and structure. For example, a daily routine might include choosing a shirt, getting dressed, eating breakfast, and then brushing teeth at the same time every morning. When your child completes tasks and routines without being distracted, give a lot of praise.
- **Model good behavior** in settings where your child must be polite, honest, or make mistakes without getting upset. Talk with your child about different kinds of feelings, and show how to be caring toward others. For example, small children will quickly learn to ask a crying person if he or she needs a tissue or a hug. Remind your child often of polite words to use, such as, "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry" or "Are you okay?" Practice how to wait until the other person is done talking in a conversation and how to nicely say no to a friend's request. If your child gets upset or throws a tantrum, try to stay calm. A parent who gets upset during a tantrum will only reinforce bad behavior. Instead, calmly tell your child to ask for what he or she wants without crying or whining. Another plan that may be useful is calmly setting a time-out period where the child decides when he or she is ready to come out.
- **Let your child pay attention to one thing at a time.** Often the toys or activities children choose give them a chance practice a new skill at their own rate and in their own way. Make time to play with your child. You can pretend to be a patient for the doctor or a customer at the restaurant. Don't be surprised if your child often picks the same activity or toy, or if he or she stays on one task longer than expected. Your child will move on to the next thing when the time is right.
- **Encourage your child to play with other children.** He or she will learn to show feelings, to respect others by sharing and taking turns, and how to get along with new people. When children are very young, invite one or two other children of the same age to play in your home.
- **Assist independent thinking** by going along with your child's pretend play. Your child's imaginary play is made up of his or her first original ideas, and it's important to show that you value those ideas. Encourage your child's creativity by playing along even when it feels silly. Provide dress-up clothes, pretend or real kitchen items, or puppets for creative play. Offer your child plain paper rather than printed coloring books. Ask your child to describe the things he or she likes or dislikes and tell you why. Start a "This is Me" album for keepsakes or pictures your child decides are important. This album may become a journal or diary as he or she grows older.

Resources

<http://www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/pdf/tools.html#families>

The early childhood section of the mental health tool kit from Bright Futures at Georgetown University includes PDFs of articles and activities related to fears, sleep, limit setting, creating special time, behavior, communication, sibling interaction, and time outs.

<http://www.freespirit.com>

Free Spirit Publishing offers books for children and parents about children's social-emotional needs.

If you need more ideas, consider talking with other people who have young children's interests in mind, such as early childhood family education (ECFE) program coordinators, other parents, your family doctor, a social worker, librarians (especially those who lead preschool activities), and daycare professionals or teachers you meet in your neighborhood or at your place of worship.



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Number 502



Putting Words Together

By Rynette R. Kjesbo, M.S., CCC-SLP

As children approach their second birthday (around the age of 18-24 months), they often go through a phase of development that experts call a "language explosion." During this time, children start adding new words to their vocabularies at a rapid pace. Although it typically takes children almost two years to start using their first 50 words, during this language explosion, most children add hundreds of words to their vocabularies.



How Will I Know If My Child Is Ready to Start Putting Words Together?

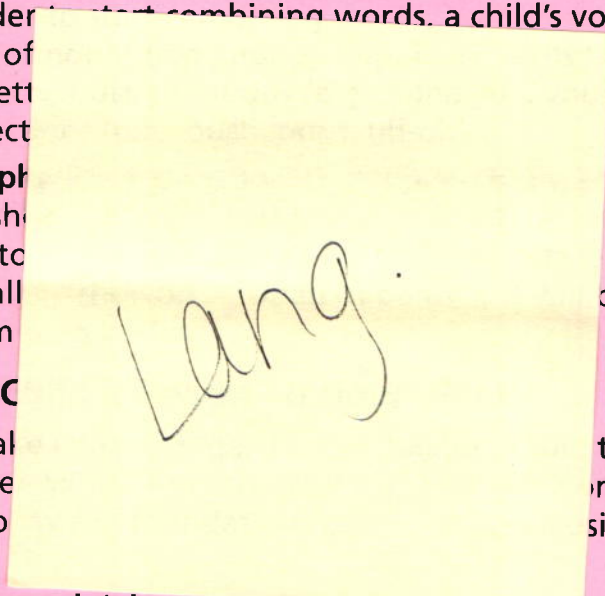
Children can't start building phrases and sentences with words until they have the right "building blocks" to use. Use the checklist below to determine if your child may be ready to start putting words together:

- **My child has a vocabulary of at least 35-50 words.** If your child doesn't use at least 35-50 single words, he won't have enough words in his vocabulary to start combining words.
- **My child is using some words with more than one syllable.** Just as words are the building blocks of phrases and sentences, syllables are the building blocks of words. If your child hasn't demonstrated the ability to string syllables together in words, he is not ready to string words together into phrases and sentences.
- **My child is using words from different parts of speech.** If your child is only using verbs (for example), it would be very difficult for him to produce phrases/sentences that make sense. In order to start combining words, a child's vocabulary should contain a combination of nouns (e.g., go, eat, play), adjectives (e.g., big, pretty), prepositions (e.g., up, out, in), and interjections.
- **My child can imitate a phrase.** Most children find imitating phrases and short sentences with their own phrases/short sentences (e.g., "big ball") to be difficult for him to start producing them.

My Child

Just as some children take a little longer to start putting words together, there are some things you can do to help them produce sentences:

- **Expand on your child's words/phrases and model correct grammar usage (without**



pointing out your child's errors). For example, if your child says, "Go!" or "Mama go!" respond back, "Yes! Mommy is going to work." Repeating and expanding your child's productions assures your child that you heard and understood him and it gives him a model for longer productions and proper grammar.

- **Read with your child.** Books (especially repetitive books) expose your child to language and grammar. Reading repetitive books allows your child the opportunity to participate in the reading experience by repeating the parts that are written over and over.
- **Sing familiar songs.** Like repetitive books, singing familiar songs allows your child to participate by singing the parts that he already knows. For added practice, try leaving out phrases your child can fill in on his own. For example, "Twinkle, twinkle... (little star). How I wonder... (what you are)."
- **Play and interact with your child.** When you play with your child, model language for him. The more you interact with your child and model language for him, the more he will learn about communication and language.
- **Talk to your child often and talk about everything.** Daily routines present you with great opportunities to talk about objects and activities familiar to your child. This helps him learn the meanings of words by associating the words with their related activities.

While there are some approximate milestones for typical language development, there are no set-in-stone deadlines. Some children may achieve milestones early while others may take a little bit longer to develop these skills. If you have concerns about your child's development, consult your pediatrician or a speech-language pathologist. For more information about earlier speech and language development, see Handy Handout #15: Early Language Development (from Birth to 12 months) and Handy Handout #496: First Words.

Resources:

"Baby Talk: A Month-By-Month Timeline," accessed September 8, 2017, <http://www.parents.com/baby/development/talking/baby-talk-a-month-by-month-timeline1/>

"Child Language Development: What to Expect at 18-24 months," accessed September 8, 2017, <http://www.talkingkids.org/2011/04/your-talking-toddler-what-to-expect-at.html>

"The Language Explosion," accessed September 8, <http://www.newsweek.com/language-explosion-174934>

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[Item #BK-315](#)

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[Item #BK-372](#)

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[Item #BKR-2345B](#)



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Number 498



Encouraging Good Communication with Children

By Kevin Stuckey, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

Parents play the most important role in building communication skills in their children. Children develop communication habits by the way they see parents interacting with others. Parents who listen and speak with patience, interest, and attention prove to be the best teachers of listening and give their children the greatest audience in the world.

Listening Skills

Listening is a learned skill and an essential part of the communication exchange with your child. It is important to model good listening skills when your child is communicating via verbal messages (questions, requests) or nonverbal ones (actions or non-actions). You will be setting a good example for your children, and help them to become active listeners.



Active listening is the central component of communication.

When parents are active listeners, other people may describe them as having good intuition and as being “tuned in” to their children. The process of active listening will help your child understand feelings and be less afraid of the negative ones. It will also allow them the opportunity to talk about and solve their own problems as well as gain more control over behavior and emotions.

To become an active listener:

- Set aside time to listen and block out distractions as much as possible. Encourage your child to talk directly to you so you may model the habits of good listening.
- Some parents and children find they can communicate best just before bedtime or when they share an evening snack.
- Maintain eye contact while your child talks. When your child speaks to you, show that you are genuinely interested in their thoughts and feelings.
- Listen to, summarize, and repeat back to your child the message you are hearing.
- Watch for your child’s nonverbal cues including facial expressions, posture, energy level, or changes in behavior patterns. The underlying messages may include the feelings, fears, and concerns of your child such as being scared... sad...angry...happy.

- Accept and show respect for what your child is expressing, even if it does not coincide with your own ideas and expectations. Listen respectfully and do not cut children off before they have finished speaking. Strengthen your child's confidence by reassuring them that you hear their ideas.
- Do not criticize, judge, or interrupt them while they are speaking. Try to put yourself in your child's place so you can better understand what he/she is experiencing.



Talking Techniques

When talking to your child, try to make it a positive dialogue, rather than impose judgment or place blame. Also, as you communicate with your child, be sensitive to your tone of voice. Do not let your emotions confuse the message you are trying to convey. Avoid using "put-down" messages that judge or criticize a child. They might involve name-calling, ridiculing, or embarrassing the child. These messages can have a serious negative impact on the child and on self-esteem. If you communicate the message that your child is bad, inconsiderate, a disappointment, or a failure, that is how he/she is likely to perceive themselves, not only during childhood but for many years thereafter.

Consider using "I" messages rather than "you" messages, especially when attempting to change or encourage certain behavior. "I" messages are statements like "I would like more quiet time when I am trying to read." With "I" statements, children receive the message in a more positive light. They often say things like "I didn't realize that the noise I was making was bothering you." Children often assume more responsible roles if they are made aware of and understand the feelings and needs of others.

By contrast, "you" messages are statements like "You should never do that." "You make me so angry." "Why don't you pay attention?" These messages are more child-focused and are more likely to put a child on the defensive, encourage personal counterarguments, and discourage effective communication.

Be as consistent as possible with all your children. You should have the same communication approach and style with every child, although the unique aspects of each relationship and each child's temperament may require some modifications. Do not appear to play favorites or be more accepting of one child than another.

"Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12" by American Academy of Pediatrics (2004, Updated 2015) Retrieved 8-18-17 from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Components-of-Good-Communication.aspx>

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Photo Feelings Fun Deck

[Item #FD-37](#)

Social Skills Chipper Chat

[Item #CC-88](#)

Ask & Answer Social Skills Game

[Item #SOS-62](#)



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Number 496



First Words

By Rynette R. Kjesbo, M.S., CCC-SLP

There isn't a more exciting time in a parent's life than when his/her baby starts doing things for the first time... his first smile, first time pushing up from lying on his tummy, first time rolling over, first time sitting up without support, first time crawling, his first words (especially when those first words include "mama" or "dada")... So when does a baby begin to talk?

Before a baby even begins making sounds, he/she is watching and listening to the people surrounding him/her. The baby is observing gestures, sounds, facial expressions, actions, and movements. At the age of 3-6 months, babies begin gurgling, cooing, and babbling (i.e., playing with different sounds). They start understanding some words at 6-9 months of age and imitating sounds at 5-10 months. Then finally, as children transition from being "babies" to being "toddlers" at 12-15 months of age, they begin using their first meaningful words. (Common first words include "mama," "dada," "hi," "bye," "juice," "milk," "doggy," etc.)

Why Do Toddlers Begin To Communicate?

Toddlers begin using words for many reasons. Their first words are often nouns such as words used to label objects, people, or pets (e.g., "ball," "mama," "dada," and "doggy") or words used to satisfy their wants and needs (e.g., "juice," "milk," and "cookie"). They can also use their first words for greetings such as "hi" and "bye."

As toddlers experience success at communicating with words, their vocabulary will grow. It grows slowly at first but around the age of 19-20 months, new words develop rapidly. Toddlers will start adding verbs (e.g., "go," "play," and "eat"), adjectives (e.g., "big," "loud," and "hot"), and prepositions (e.g., "up," "out," and "off") into their vocabulary. They also start putting words together and asking simple questions (like "What's that?").

What Can I Do To Make My Baby/Toddler Talk?

Some toddlers take a little longer to start talking. While you can't make a baby/toddler talk, there are some things you can do to lay the foundation for him/her to begin using words:

- **Pay attention when your child makes sounds or uses gestures.** Your child may be attempting to communicate with you. When you respond to your child's attempts at communication, it shows your child that communication is important and helps to obtain his/her wants and needs.
- **Imitate your child's vocalizations, facial expressions, and gestures, then wait for a response.** This shows your child that what he/she is communicating is important and means something to you. It also teaches him/her the back-and-forth pattern of communication.
- **Play and interact with your child.** When you play with your child, model language for him/her. The more you interact with your child and model language for him/her, the more he/she will learn about words, their meaning, communication, and language.

- **Give your child the opportunity to communicate.** While it may be easier to anticipate your child's needs and give them what you think they will want, encourage your child to make attempts to request what he/she wants. Reward any attempt your child makes to show him/her the effectiveness of communication.
- **Talk to your child often and label everything.** Daily routines present parents with great opportunities to label objects and activities that are familiar to their child. This helps the child learn that words have meaning, and it helps him/her to associate the words with their meanings.

While there are some approximate milestones for typical language development, there are no set-in-stone deadlines. Some children may achieve milestones early while others may take a little bit longer to develop these skills. If you have concerns about your child's development, consult your pediatrician. For more information about earlier speech and language development (from Birth to 12 months), see Handy Handout #15: Early Language Development.

Resources:

"Baby Talk: A Month-By-Month Timeline," accessed July 26, 2017,

<http://www.parents.com/baby/development/talking/baby-talk-a-month-by-month-timeline1/>

"Your Baby's First Words," accessed July 21, 2017,

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby-talk-your-babys-first-words#1>



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[Item #BK-311](#)

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[Item #BK-315](#)

Word Flips

[Item #BK-318](#)

Classifying Photo Fish

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Practicing Language Skills in the Car

by Erica Zollman, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

The car is a great place to practice speech/language skills and strategies. Take advantage of time spent in the car by playing some fun, language-based games.



Here are a few ideas:

- **Categories:** To play this game, one player chooses a category, such as "animals." Every player takes a turn naming an item in the category. If a player repeats a word or is unable to name a word in the category, he/she is out. Play continues until one player remains and wins the game. To make this task more complex, have the child add more descriptive words to the category (e.g., animals with tails, animals that live in the zoo) or name animals alphabetically (eg., aardvark, bear, cat, dog, etc.).
- **Rhyme Time:** To practice phonological awareness skills, children can practice creating rhymes for things they see from the car window or in the environment around them. For example, if a child chooses the word "tree," other players must name some rhyming words (e.g., knee, see, me). The player who gives the most rhymes is the winner! As an added bonus, players can create rhymes using nonsense words (e.g., slee, dree). Other players take turns identifying whether the rhyming word is a real word or a nonsense word.
- **Cities and Syllables:** As you pass through different towns, cities, or states, children can practice counting the number of syllables in that city or state's name. For example, when passing through Idaho, the child counts or claps out three syllables. When passing through Tallahassee, the child counts/claps out four syllables. In a variation of this game, a parent chooses a particular number of syllables. Players look for words in the environment (e.g., road signs, billboards) that contain the specified number of syllables. Each player earns a point for finding a word. The player with the most points wins!
- **Guess It:** Players take turns describing familiar items or objects (e.g., car, apple, baby). The first player chooses an object and gives three clues to describe it. All of the other players take turns guessing what the first player is describing (e.g., it is a fruit; it can be red or green; it grows on a tree). If no players guess correctly, the first player provides another clue about the object. The player who correctly identifies the mystery object earns a point and chooses the next word to describe.

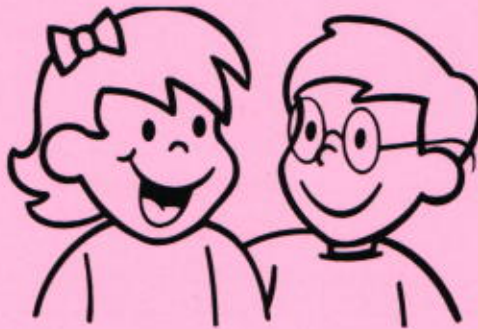
Showtime: Choose age-appropriate DVDs to show children in the car. As the movie or program plays, pause the film to ask questions, such as:

1. Who is that character?
2. What do you think is going to happen next?
3. Where does this story take place?
4. When does this story take place?
5. How does this character feel? Why? How can you tell? When was a time that you felt that way?
6. Who is your favorite character? Why?
7. What was your favorite part of the movie? Why?

At the end of the film, have the child retell the story to another person in the car. The story should include characters, settings, chronological events, and a conclusion. Encourage the child to produce a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

- Apps: Educational apps that help children practice language skills are available for tablets or smartphones. Apps like Super Duper's *StoryMaker* are interactive and engaging. Apps can address several domains of language: grammar, vocabulary, and social skills.

Long rides in the car can be fun and educational! Playing games during long trips is a great way to expand and reinforce language skills.



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Name that Animal Category! Fun Deck App

Kangaroo Island Photo Classifying iPad App

Super Duper StoryMaker App

Name That Category! Fun Deck
[Item #FD-79](#)

Imagination Questions Fun Deck App

Auditory Rhyme Time Fun Deck
[Item #FD-94](#)

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Number 371



Are My Child's Language Skills Developing Normally?

by Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

A very complicated and amazing foundation of language skills begins developing at birth. Children develop certain skills at different times as they move through the early stages of learning language. On the average, children learn to read by age seven, but learning to read is dependent upon their acquisition of a good foundation of skills.

The following list of milestones is the result of current research in the field where studies continue to analyze how and when children learn and begin to present certain language skills. As you look over this list, keep in mind that children vary greatly in how and when they develop and learn these skills. These skills do not follow a concrete order.

From birth to age 3, most babies and toddlers become able to:

- Make cooing, babbling sounds in the crib which gives way to enjoying rhyming and nonsense word games with a parent or caregiver.
- Play along in games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake."
- Respond to gestures and facial expressions.
- Associate words they hear frequently with what the words mean.
- Imitate the tones, rhythms, and sounds that adults use when talking.
- Handle objects such as board books and alphabet blocks in their play.
- Recognize certain books by their covers.
- Pretend to read books.
- Understand how to handle a book.
- Share books with an adult as a routine part of life.
- Name some objects in a book.
- Talk about characters in books.
- Look at pictures in books and realize they are symbols of real things.
- Listen attentively to stories.
- Begin paying attention to specific print such as the first letters of their names.
- Scribble with a purpose as if writing or drawing something.
- Produce letter-like forms and scribbles that resemble writing.
- Ask or demand that adults or others read or write with them.



From ages 3-4, most preschoolers become able to:

- Enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks.
- Understand that print carries a message.
- Make attempts to read and write.
- Identify familiar signs and labels.
- Participate in rhyming games.
- Identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches.
- Attempt writing letters to represent meaningful words like their name or phrases such as "I love you."

At age 5, most kindergartners become able to:

- Sound as if they are reading when they pretend to read.
- Enjoy someone reading to them.
- Retell simple stories.
- Use descriptive language to explain or to ask questions.
- Recognize letters and make letter-sound matches.
- Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds.
- Understand that reading print goes left-to-right and top-to-bottom.
- Match spoken words with written ones.
- Write letters of the alphabet and some words they use and hear often.
- Write stories with some readable parts.



At age 6, most first-graders can:

- Read and retell familiar stories.
- Use a variety of ways to help themselves read and comprehend a story (rereading, predicting, asking questions, or using visual cues or pictures).
- Decide on their own to use reading and writing for different purposes.
- Read some things aloud with ease.
- Identify new words by using letter-sound matches, parts of words, and their understanding of the rest of a story or printed item.
- Identify an increasing number of words by sight.
- Sound out and represent major sounds in a word when trying to spell.
- Write about topics that mean a lot to them.
- Use some punctuation marks and capitalization.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, talk with your child's doctor, teacher, or a speech-language pathologist. For children with any kind of disability or learning problem, the sooner they can get the special help they need, the easier it will be for them to learn.

"Remember that while babies aren't born book lovers, they are born learners. The more you read to them, the more they learn." Kate Jack – Parent & Child Magazine

Resources

Andrea DeBruin-Parecki, Kathryn Perkinson, Lance Ferderer. (January, 2000) *Literacy milestones from birth to age 6*. Retrieved September 2012. http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Literacy_Milestones/

Reach Out and Read. *Developmental milestones of early literacy*. Retrieved September 2012. http://www.reachoutandread.org/FileRepository/RORMilestones_English.pdf

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Item# TP-7802

Preschoolers Acquiring Language Skills Combo
Item# TPX-18603

Word Joggers™ Junior
Item# GB-345

What Does Miss Bee See? Fun Deck®
Item# FD-118

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Promoting Oral Language Development in Young Children

by Audrey W. Prince, M.Ed.

Research tells us that children who have strong oral language skills often have strong reading and writing skills. In contrast, children with oral language problems are at higher risk of reading and writing difficulties (Scarborough, 2001). Educators and parents should encourage oral language even in the earliest stages of a child's development. The following is a list of specific strategies to help promote oral language development in young children.



Talk with Your Children

Educators and parents should talk or converse with their children whenever possible. Children often love to talk about their friends, families, or favorite activities. Try to develop "talking points." Talking points are conversation starters that you can use with a child. Consider writing them on a set of note cards to keep with you whenever you want to promote conversation with a child. Make conversation a game by asking the child to "pick a card" to initiate a conversation.

Get Close & Listen

When speaking with children it is important to get close. The child should be able to see your lips and facial expressions, hear your voice clearly, and make eye contact with you. Making sure that you "get close" helps ensure that the child keeps an interest in what you are saying. Make sure during conversation with your child that you are sending a clear message that you are listening. When a child speaks to you, make comments about what they are saying, nod your head, or add "Mm-hmm," "Really?" or "Tell me more."

Respond and Expand

When a child says something to you, respond whenever possible. After you respond, try to expand the conversation. Add more context to the language even when a child's response is a simple one. For example, if the child says, "I like apples," the teacher/parent might say, "I like apples too. What kind of apple do you like best?"

Talk About What You Are Doing

Daily activities, such as cleaning up toys or snack time, provide many opportunities for language development. Talk with children about what they are doing and what you are doing. This type of talking exposes children to language in general, involves them in learning conversation skills, and helps children acquire and use vocabulary that is important in their everyday lives.

Tell Stories

Tell stories every day about things from the past or things that will happen. The teacher can talk about something the class might do that day or the parent can talk about an upcoming event. During a story, use prompts to encourage storytelling like, "Tell me a story," "What happened next?" and "When did that happen?" or "Tell me what you did at school (Grandma's house) today."

Use Appropriate Levels of Vocabulary

When speaking with children we have to be careful to not use too many new words or too few new words. There is no magic formula for the correct number of words, so teachers and parents must be aware of each child's abilities to figure out if the vocabulary is confusing to the child or if he/she is able to keep up and understand.

Provide Prompts That Promote Oral Language

Include microphones, old telephones, puppets, flannel boards, and even paper towel tubes in your child's play area. Items to play dress-up are big hits with children. Pretending to be someone else encourages children to mimic the vocabulary, facial expressions, and body language that they see and hear from others. These types of prompts encourage oral language interactions. Make them available and encourage children to use them during their playtime.



Resource

V. S. Bennett-Armistead, *Literacy and the youngest learner*. Scholastic, Inc., New York, NY, 2005.

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS

Being able to perceive, produce, and use words to understand and communicate with others is essential for children to get along well with other people and to learn how to read and write. Children develop language skills by hearing, seeing, doing, and repeating.

- **Read together every day.** Talk about the pictures and ask your child to tell you what's happening. Go to the library and check out books together. Most libraries also have free story time.
- **Sing simple songs or recite nursery rhymes.** Once your child knows a song or rhyme well, surprise your child with funny changes (e.g., a cow says "oink" and a pig says "meow").
- **Make up a story** or act out common tasks with your child (e.g., cooking food, going to the doctor). Use puppets, dolls, and other toys as story props to make it more fun. You can make a book of your child's story, or if you have a video camera, you can film your child's movie.
- **Talk about daily activities** as they happen, such as the steps to make breakfast each morning (e.g., "First we get a bowl then we get the cereal."). Wherever you go, describe the smells, sounds, people, and things that you see.
- **Expand your child's language** by answering him or her with a wellformed sentence that includes a new word or idea. For example, if your child says, "Truck broke," you might respond by saying, "The truck is broken. It needs a new wheel."
- **Play games with sounds and words**, such as clapping out syllables of words, finding an object that starts with a certain sound or letter, and playing opposite-word games (e.g., "Soup is hot but ice cream is ____.").
- **Show that printed words have meaning** by showing examples other than in books, such as signs on your street and items at home like food boxes.
- **In the bath using foam letters**, have your child stick the letters on the bathtub wall and make up words or spell a name. Whatever he or she spells, try to sound it out, even if it's a nonsense word!
- **Encourage use of any language** your child hears often. Young children's brains can understand more than one language.

Resources

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart.htm>

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/parent-stim-activities.htm>

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association offers information representing, on average, the age by which most children speaking one language will be able to do certain things. The website provides a chart of what your child should be able to do and ideas for activities to improve skills.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/7833>

The Reading Rockets website features reading tips for parents of preschoolers, including tip sheets in other languages. Reading Rockets is an educational first step of WETA, the most popular public television and radio station in Washington, D.C., and is funded by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

www.bobbooks.com

With only four letters in the beginning Bob Books®, your child can sound out all the words and read the whole book on his or her own, thus increasing confidence.

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/6313>

The Learning Disabilities Association of America has published a speech and language milestone chart online.

<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/31days/>

Thirty-one fun activities for you and your child (ages 3 to 5) to do together to help build literacy skills.

<http://fun.familyeducation.com/preschool/extracurricular-activities/33392.html?detoured=1>

The Family Education Network shares activity ideas for your preschool-aged child to build learning skills.

<http://www.storylineonline.net/>

This streaming video program features Screen Actors Guild members reading children's books.

<http://pbskids.org/read>

PBS Ready to Learn Program