

Early Language Development

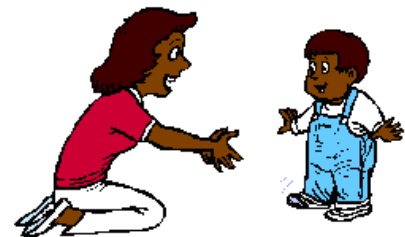
Young children develop language by communicating with other people. Early words are learnt through copying and repetition during communication with people throughout the day. Children need to hear a word many times and in many different situations before they fully understand its meaning. Children often understand a word before they can say it.



Children need lots of time to interact with adults every day, so that they can hear how they talk, and learn from them. This interaction time is very important from the day your children are born, even before they start using their own words.

Practical Ideas to Support Early Language Development

- Children learn to speak by listening to and imitating others around them. Talk with your child throughout the day. Everyday routines can provide great opportunities to learn new words (e.g. at bath time you can use words for body parts and actions such as splash/wash/dry)
- Keep your language clear and simple.
- Reply every time your child says something (even if they use gestures or noises instead of words).
- Position yourself at your child's level where they can see and hear you easily
- Spend time looking at books with your child, talking about the pictures. Reading aloud to your baby is a wonderful shared activity and it's an important form of stimulation. Reading to your child develops their skills in listening, memory and vocabulary in a fun way. Begin with feely or lift the flap hard-back books that allows the younger child to participate.
- Avoid unnecessary distractions such as the TV or radio.
- When playing with your child try to follow their lead by playing with and talking about what they are interested in. You can copy their actions, sounds, facial expressions and words.
- Repeat back what your child says and add another word e.g.
 - **Child:** "mi"
 - **Parent:** "milk, more milk?"



- Say nursery rhymes to your child on a daily basis, the more your child hears you the more likely they will be to join in. Nursery rhymes are important for language and later literacy development.

- Singing or listening to songs with your child enables you to introduce new words, encourage turn taking, and learn rhyming words.

- Play turn-taking games as this encourages a child to understand the rules of turn taking when communicating with others. For example, when building a tower with blocks take turns to put a block on top or take turns to put in a piece of a jigsaw



- Play games that develop listening, such as “ready steady go”, the child must listen for “go” before rolling a ball etc.

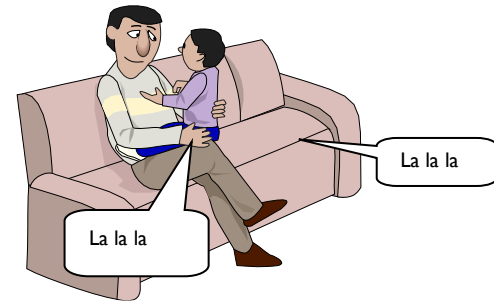
- Physical contact is important in developing language - sitting on your knee, playing finger-rhymes, encouraging imitation of sounds, such as animal noises, cars, trains, etc.

- Encourage words by giving your child a choice e.g. “Would you like milk or water?” Do this every time you ask your child a question even if you know the answer.

- Language stimulation should be fun for your child and for yourself.

Your child will not learn if she/he does not enjoy it.

- Repetition of language is important; a child may need to hear a word said several times before they will be able to use these words for themselves.



- Your child needs a reason to talk. Look for opportunities to give them a reason to talk e.g.

- Move their favourite toy out of their reach so that they need to ask you for it
- Give a little juice so they need to ask for more
- Give a yoghurt but not a spoon so that your child has the opportunity to ask for it
- Do not predict what your child wants. Give your child time to try to communicate their needs. Do not give them things automatically



- Pause when you talk with your child. Give them lots of time to respond to what you say. Be careful of asking too many questions without giving your child enough time to respond

- Finally, do not demand speech from your child at this stage. Concentrate more on getting him/her to listen and respond to your speech.