



Supporting Early Speech Development

Get child's attention first

Get down to the child's level & engage them before speaking. Children find it difficult to listen & carry on an activity at the same time. Saying their name helps them stop & listen to you.

Imitate the child's language

With very young children, simply imitate their words and sentences. This will show them that you're valuing their words and will encourage them to keep on talking.

Use the full range of expression

Speak in an animated voice with fun gestures & facial expressions. You'll give clues about what your words mean, which can be helpful when the child is trying to understand you, and you'll be demonstrating fun non-verbal communication.

Use simple repetitive language

Keep sentences short. Describe everyday activities. As you talk about what you are doing ('I'm washing the cup. '), repeat your words clearly & slowly helps children join in.

Build on what the child says

Speak clearly & add 1 or 2 words to the child's sentence. For instance, if the child says 'look, car', you could say 'look, red car'. You'll be signaling that you've heard what they've said and modelling the next stage of language development.

Use all the senses to help teach new words

Make learning new words fun & memorable. If you're teaching names of fruits, then ask the child to feel & smell the fruit as they learn it. Another idea is to use songs & rhymes as a learning tool by skipping words for the child to fill in.

Give the child time to respond

Children often need time to put their thoughts together before answering, so give them time to respond to you. Make sure to maintain eye contact & anticipation as you wait for them to fully respond.

Be careful with questions

Don't ask too many questions, especially ones that sound like you're testing the child. The best questions are ones that challenge the child to think rather than an instant answer. Too many questions block the flow of a natural conversation.

Don't criticize, show correct way

Praise the child's efforts, even if the results aren't perfect. If a child makes an error, just say the correct version rather than pointing out the mistake. If the child says, 'I goed to the park', you might say 'Wow, you went to the park'.

Make learning language fun

Play around with words, sounds & sentences. Don't be afraid to talk in funny voices. The more children see you experimenting with language, the more likely they'll be able to do it themselves. And experimenting with language is a vital aspect of learning.

Enabling Children to Reach Their Full Potential