

“What can I do at home to facilitate my child’s language skills?”

Language-building Tips for Parents (Kindergarten)

General strategies:

- Use books and stories to help your child learn new words
- Follow your child’s lead: Watch for things that interest your child rather than something that interests you
- Praise your child’s efforts as all children need encouragement
 - o “I like how you try your best to do this.”
 - o “Good job using your words!”
 - o “You did it all by yourself!”
- Respond more to WHAT your child says, not HOW it is said
- Repeat words and phrases correctly instead of correcting your child
 - o Child: “The girl eat the apple.”, Parent: “Yes, you’re right! The girl ATE the apple.”
 - o Child: “Three car.”, Parent: “Yes. There are three CARS.”
- Expand your child’s sentences
 - o Child: “Look cat over there.”, Parent: Yes, it’s a cat. The cat is climbing up.”
- Use open-ended questions over yes-no questions
 - o “What will happen next?”
 - o “Why is he upset?”
- Make comments on what the child is doing/seeing over asking too many questions
- Set up temptations or situations where your child needs to use words
 - o Give your child a bowl of cereal without a spoon
 - o Give your child only one shoe
 - o Give your child a toothbrush without toothpaste
 - o Read a book upside down
 - o Put the doll’s pants on its head
 - o Put desired items in transparent but closed containers (within sight, out of reach)

Vocabulary

- Around 2 years of age, a child should understand about 300 words and use about 50 words (mostly names of common objects such as “shoe” and “car”)
- Around 3 years of age, a child should say more than 500 words
- By 4 years of age, a child can name at least 3 things in a common group (e.g., 3 animals, 3 fruits)



- By 4 years of age, a child knows at least 2 things about common objects (e.g., A ball bounces, it's round, I can throw it)
- How can I help?
 - o Read books everyday
 - Look at books together and take turns naming and talking about the pictures
 - Wait and let your child finish a sentence in a familiar story
 - Make up your own story to go with the pictures
 - Take turns reading a page at a time
 - Get your child to tell you the story in his/her own words
 - o Use unusual activities to teach new words and ideas, e.g., going to the dentist, looking at a broken toy, going on a holiday
 - o Let your child learn by doing
 - When you go grocery shopping, name the food items as your child puts them into the shopping cart
 - When you give your child a bath, name body parts
 - When you dress your child, name the clothes
 - When you go for a walk outside, talk about all the things you see
 - When you cook, allow your child to help and talk about what you are doing, e.g., "Stir", "Pour water in"

Sentence structures, length and complexity

- Pronouns
 - o Research indicates that children use most subjective and objective pronouns by 3 years of age and possessive pronouns by age 5
 - o By age 3, a child should be using pronouns such as I, my, me, mine, you, your, she, he, yours, we
 - o By age 4, a child should be using pronouns such as they, us, hers, his, them, her
 - o By age 5, a child should be using pronouns such as its, our, him, myself, yourself, ours, their, theirs
- Plurals
 - o By age 3, a child should begin to use some plurals (e.g., cars, dogs, cats)
- Tenses
 - o By age 3, a child should be using present progressive *-ing*
 - o By age 3, a child should begin to use irregular past tense (e.g., fell, ate)
 - o By age 4, a child should be using regular past tense *-ed* (e.g., dropped, kicked, jumped)
 - o By age 4, a child should begin to use third person singular present tense (e.g., he swims, she goes)



- Sentence length
 - By age 2, a child should be using 2-word phrases and some 3-word sentences (e.g., “more cookie Mommy”)
 - Around 3 years of age, a child will ask simple questions like “What’s that?”, “Why?”
 - It is common that children ask questions at this age, but are not always interested in the answer
 - By age 3, a child should say sentences at least 3 or 4 words long
 - Between 4 and 5 years of age, a child should speak in complete sentences of 4 to 8 words
- What if my child:
 - only uses simple sentences
 - does not use correct grammar
 - mixes up pronouns
 - uses the wrong verb tenses
 - cannot ask questions correctly
- How can I help?
 - Spend time talking together and take turns describing pictures in books
 - Add words to make your child’s sentences longer
 - Child: “Daddy shoe.”, Parent: “Daddy’s stinky shoe!”
 - Child: “Boy climb fence.”, Parent: “Yes, the boy is climbing over the fence.”
 - Repeat your child’s sentence with the correct grammar. DO NOT say your child is wrong, just repeat the sentence
 - Child: “Him hurt hisself.”, Parent: “Ouch. He hurt himself, didn’t he?”
 - Child: “He no want it.”, Parent: “Yes, he did not want it. I think he wants the ball”
 - Child: “He the glasses broked.”, Parent: “Oh no! He broke his glasses!”
 - Child: “Dog hurt?”, Parent: “I’m not sure. Is the dog hurt? Let’s see.”

Verbal reasoning - Making sense

- To help your child:
 - use longer sentences
 - describe things
 - tell a story in the right order
 - tell about past events and the future
 - answer “how” and “why” questions
- How can I help?
 - Model examples of complex sentences
 - “We should bring umbrella BECAUSE it’s going to rain.”
 - Make your child’s sentences longer by adding a new idea
 - Child: “Puppy eat food”, Parent: “Yes. This puppy needs food to help it grow.”
 - Help your child predict and talk about the future
 - “What will happen next?”
 - “What should we do later?”
 - “What will the girl do?”
 - “First we ... Then what do we do?”
 - Ask questions to improve your child’s problem-solving skills
 - “I wonder what will happen if ...”
 - “Why did he...?”
 - “How can we ...?”
 - Help your child put events in the right order
 - Talk about where you will go before you go (e.g., Making use of future tense: “We will go to the park. We will play on the slide. We are going to have picnic there.”)
 - Talk about the event when you are there (e.g., Making use of present tense: “We are at the park. We are having a picnic now.”)
 - Discuss the event again after you go home (e.g., Making use of past tense: “We went to the park today. We played on the slide. We had sandwiches and oranges for lunch.”)