

Children's Speech and Language Service

Using everyday activities to encourage talking

Using everyday activities can be a great way to practice and develop speech and language. These activities can also change a mundane event into a pleasurable one. The child may also not realise that you are practicing speech and language skills because the activity will be fun. Using everyday tasks to promote speech and language is relatively easy, you just have to use your imagination:

Bathtime – Use lots of vocabulary during bath-time, talk to your children, and model the words for them. Introduce vocabulary: Verbs: wash, scrub, rinse, clean, brush, dry, splash, sink, float. Nouns: soap, towel, water, tap, flannel, bath, sink, body parts. Sing songs in the bath.

Tidy Up time– Play “I-spy” to practice initial sound awareness (good for speech and language development).

Putting the washing on – talk about *colours, sizes, open, shut, fast, slow, wet, dry, clean, dirty, round*.

Going to the Supermarket – talk about colours, shapes, sizes, tastes, position (up, down, next to, top, bottom)

Talk about what the people are doing (e.g. walking, working, riding etc) to focus on verbs, or name as many different occupations that you can see (driver, policeman, road-worker, shopkeeper etc).

These are just simple ways to use everyday opportunities to find entertaining and simple ways to focus on speech and language.

Games & Play

Look at books

Books are great for having a shared focus and for learning new words. Books can also play a key part in developing early speech and literacy skills. There are many ways to use books and the pictures to focus on language. You can focus on books with symbolic sounds for early speech or storybooks to focus on language. Books are a great way to work on lots of skills and children love them. Look at the books together, name the pictures, ask questions, and talk about the story.

Large doll and figure play

Toy figures such as Buzz Lightyear, Spiderman and dolls are great opportunities to help and support language development. Examples are

- *Body Parts*: Use the dolls to teach all the body parts: eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hands, fingers, tummy, feet, toes, knees, elbows, etc.

- *Clothing Labels:* Using the doll and its clothes, you can teach the names of clothing items like shirts, pants, shoes, socks, jammies, etc.
- *Basic Concepts:* Use baby with other baby toys (bed, blankets) to teach some basic concepts like: prepositions (in, on, under), colours, size concepts (using different sized dolls),
- *Verbs/Feelings:* Use the baby with some other baby toys (bed, bottle, clothes) to teach verbs/feelings/etc. like: eat, drink, sleep, sit, stand, dance, run, fly, hungry, sleepy, thirsty, etc.

Small world play

Small-world play such as farm yard sets and Playmobil type toys provide good opportunities for children to develop language and communication skills, by giving them the chance to imagine and recreate experiences. As they engage with the doll's house, or the dinosaurs, they can hear and use language to act out little stories and scenes. They again offer similar opportunities to the large doll play activities.

Role play

Dressing up is great fun and playing different roles will expand your child's imagination. In fact you do not even have to dress up to do role play. Games involving different characters will allow you to introduce lots of new related language and stretch your child's creative play skills. For instance, if you pretended to be firemen putting out a fire, think how many related words you could use" fire, fireman, fire engine, ladder, water, hose, burning, building, driving, climbing, up, down, smoke, hat, boots, jackets, save, squirt, bucket, fire out, hero, etc. Role play is great for expanding your child's imagination and introducing new vocabulary.

Music

Music is also a great way to involve your child and can be used in many ways to enhance speech and language. Music is good for getting your child to listen, and experiencing a shared focus. You can read books and follow music singing the songs as you point to the pictures. Songs also focus on intonation and stress and have a beat to them which helps with aspects of speech development. These are skills we all use when talking and syllable awareness is important when learning to talk. Music can be used to enhance language and some songs can be sung involving actions and thus creating the link between words and actions.