

# How can I encourage my child's language development?

## Observe Wait and Listen (OWL)

Give your child time to respond after you have modelled a word or a short simple sentence.

O Observe what your child is interested in

W Wait for them to do something

L Listen to your child and 'hear' what they are trying to tell you



## Use simple and short sentences

Simplifying your language and using key words (ie: the words which carry the most meaning) will assist your child's comprehension.

Instead of saying: "John, come and say goodbye to Grandma, she wants a kiss before she goes home".

Say "John, come here" ... .. "Kiss Grandma bye bye"



## Copy what your child has said

Imitating your child's speech will confirm to them that what they have said was valuable.

Once your child feels that their communication is of value, they will be encouraged to imitate your speech and are more likely to add words to their sentences.

Your child says: "up" → Mum/Dad says: "up"



## Expand what your child has said

Adding on 1 or 2 words to your child's sentence will provide them with a great model to assist in expanding their own sentences.

Your child says: "open" → Mum/Dad says: "open door"



## Use choice questioning

Provide your child with an option of 2 words. Encourage them to choose and repeat the correct word.

If you are offering your child a drink say: "Milk" or "Juice"



## Use environmental noises

Make noises associated with objects or animals that your child can see.

If you are looking through a book and see a cow say: "moo" or if you're in the car and can see a train say: "choo choo".

## Talk about you

Talk about things that are in your immediate environment. Comment on what you are doing, what you can see, hear or feel.

For example, saying: "cold" when you open the freezer door or "mixing" when preparing a meal.



## Talk about what your child is doing

This will provide you child with a model of talking

For example, "Jenny is drinking" or "Mathew is rolling"

## Sing

Use familiar songs and nursery rhymes with actions. Encourage your child to play and move along with you.



# When can I encourage my child's language development?

Developing language should be a pleasant experience for your child with lots of praise, encouragement and play. Try to incorporate these strategies regularly into your daily routine. It's important to be natural and relaxed so use them when you are bathing them, getting dressed, driving in the car, or making dinner. Include your child into your conversations and give them lots of positive reinforcement.

## Reading Books:

Although your child cannot 'read', sharing a book is a wonderful way for them to learn about new objects, people and animals. If your child points to a picture, label that picture ("*house*") or ask them a simple question ("*what's that?*"). However, try not to get caught up asking too many questions as this can become quite overwhelming and acts like a test. At this stage, it is not necessary to read the words in the book.



Instead use lots of pointing and naming. The 'choice questioning' strategy can be effective, "*Is it a house or a dog?*". Choose a simple picture book that can be easily labelled or described in a few words. Storybooks with lots of words are often too long, picture books are best.

## Making Dinner:

Let your child 'help' you make dinner. Give them a few items of food to touch, look at and count. Talk to your child about what you are doing "*washing corn*", or about the colour "*yellow corn*" or the shape "*round corn*" or the taste "*yummy corn*" or the amount "*lots of corn*". When it's time for dinner get your child to point to foods and request for items they want to eat. Name what they are pointing to "*strawberry*" and expand "*red strawberry*".



## In the bath:

Use toys and bubbles when you are in the bath and make it a playful experience. You can play games such as hide and seek. This is a great way of setting up a meaningful environment for your child to request certain toys. For example, you could put the boat behind your back and ask them "*what do you want?*" If they point you say: "*boat*" and show them. If they say "*boat*", expand their response and say "*big boat*".



## In the car:

The car is a wonderful place where your child can see new objects, people, places and animals. Name and point to these things and ask your child if they can see them too. It's also a great time to hear new sounds. Encourage your child to make these environmental sounds that they hear ("*beep beep*", "*brmm*").



# NORMAL SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

It is quite common for children under 5 years of age to have speech that is unclear. However, at certain ages there are speech sounds which your child should have already developed. The table below provides you with a guide to the ages when these sounds should have been mastered.



In terms of intelligibility:

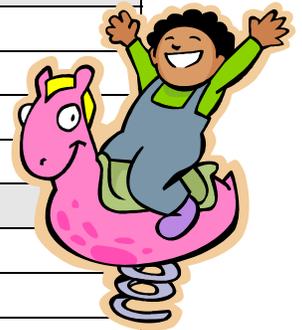
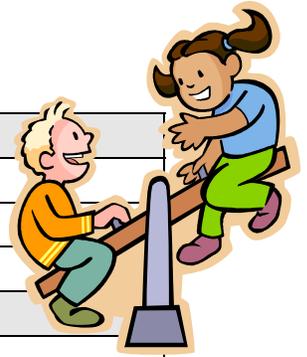
- By 18 months a child's speech is normally 25% intelligible
- By 24 months a child's speech is normally 50-75 % intelligible
- By 36 months a child's speech is normally 75-100% intelligible

Phonological Process	Examples	Gone By Approximately:
Context Sensitive Voicing and Word Final De-voicing	pig = pick pig = big car = gar	3;0 years
Final Consonant Deletion	boat = bow up = uh soon = soo	3;3 years
Fronting	car = tar go = doe ship = sip	3;6 years
Consonant Harmony	mine = mime kittycat = tittytat	3;9 years
Weak Syllable Deletion	elephant = efant potato = tato television = tevision banana = nana	4;0 years
Cluster Reduction	spoon = poon train = chain clean = keen	4;0 years
Gliding of liquids	run = one leg = weg leg = yeg	5;0 years
Stopping: /f/	fish = tish	3;0 years
/s/	soap = dope	3;0 years
/v/	Very = berry	3;6 years
/z/	zoo = doo	3;6 years
"sh"	shop = dop	4;6 years
"j"	jump = dump	4;6 years
"ch"	chair = tear	4;6 years
Voiceless "th"	thing = ting	5;0 years
Voiced "th"	that = dat	5;0 years

Table from: <http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/acquisition.html>  
(Caroline Bowen 2006)

# BASIC CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

2 - 2 ½ years	
Pronouns	I, my, mine, me, your
Position	In, out, of, on, off, under
2 ½ - 3 years	
Pronouns	She, he, her, him, hers, his
Size	Big, tall
Quality	Soft, heavy
Quantity	all
3 - 3 ½ years	
Pronouns	You, they
Quality	Hard, same
Position	Top, apart, toward
3 ½ - 4 years	
Pronouns	Us, them, their
Quality	light
Size	little
Quantity	Full, more, less
Position	In front of, back of, around, next to
4 ½ - 5 years	
Position	Beside, bottom, backward, forward
Quantity	each
5 - 5 ½ years	
Pronouns	our
Position	Behind, ahead of, first, last



(Information adapted from Communication Skill Builders)