

Teaching Speech and Language Skills

...A family guide

Recognizing Different Cries (1-4 months)

From a very early age, children have a distinguishable cry for a soiled diaper, hunger, or discomfort. In the first year of life consistently respond to your child's cry. Studies indicate that infants picked up the most the 1st year cry the least in the 2nd year.

If your child is fussy change positions, talk playfully, change his diaper, or cuddle him. Your child learns that crying yields results and parents learn to distinguish one cry from another. Presumably he will develop feelings of security.

Laughing Out Loud (3-6 months)

Language occurs gradually through interaction with people, activities and the environment. Your child responds to your cues. Prompt and encourage playful interactions. Create situations in which your child must use some form of communication.

- Tease your child throughout the day (e.g., pretend to drink from the baby bottle).
- Create absurdities (e.g., place your child's hat on your foot).
- Make silly sounds and faces.
- Play games such as peek-a-boo, "so big," and tickling.
- Play chasing games.
- Sing fun, interactive songs (e.g., "This Little Piggy went to the Market").
- Laugh along with your child.
- Respond enthusiastically when he responds.
- Repeat your child's favorite activities.

Localizing Sounds (3-6 months)

Children often search for a sound source as his interest in the sound presented increases. Reactions become apparent when your child turns his head, inhibits body movements, or searches for the sound source.

- Encourage your child to orient to sounds by turning, looking, reaching, or moving in the direction of the sound stimulus.
- Place your child on your lap or in front of you so that you are face to face.
- Vocalize while moving to the right, to the left and then back to the middle.
- Guide your child's head to follow your voice and other sounds presented.
- Present sounds out of your child's field of vision. Bring the sound back into your child's sight and then change the location of the sound.

Responding to Sound (3-6 months)

When a child focuses their attention on a sound stimulus by watching intently or smiling, it means that they are beginning to associate the sound with specific objects, people or activities.

- Make sudden, loud noises close to your child and then farther away.
- Make noises to your child's right side, left side, and from behind. Vary the loudness of the sound stimulus. Increase loudness if your child does not respond. Decrease the volume until it is at a level where your child consistently responds.
- Change the sounds introduced.
- Use toys (e.g., rattles, whistles, bells, music, squeaky toys), and draw attention to environmental sounds (e.g., vacuum, doorbell, trains, airplanes, cars, motorcycles, blow dryers, etc.).
- Combine touch and visual cues with sounds to train your child to respond to each new sound introduced.
- Reinforce responses with smiles, praise, touch and cuddling.

Vocal Play (3 months & up)

From birth, your child is learning the power of communication: He cries, you feed him, cuddle him or do whatever it takes to make him feel better. Your response to his sounds helps to create the foundation for language. Children typically use their voices to relate to their environment. Cooing and babbling are early stages of speech development. Children then begin to string sounds together in order to form syllables. They incorporate different sounds and intonations of speech by mimicking what they hear. Imitation occurs when a child repeats what you say. This is an important skill that occurs early in speech and language development.

- Let your child touch your face as you speak and playfully vocalize.
- Don't be afraid to sound "silly" and imitate your child's babbling.
- Have fun with noises such as clicking your tongue making raspberries and kissing sounds.

Attending to Music (6-9 months)

- "Let go" while playing music, clap your hands, rock back and forth, sway from side to side and move your child to the beat of the music.
- Remove the physical cues and allow your child to imitate the movements that you previously provided.
- Introduce instruments (e.g., rattles, drums, and other musical toys).
- Play music, stop it intermittently, and start it after your child looks toward you.
- Use hand over hand assistance to help your child shake a rattle when music plays.
- Stop your child's rattle when the music stops, to help build understanding of "cause and effect."

- Sing familiar children’s songs and interactive finger plays, while sitting face to face with your child (e.g., The Itsy Bitsy Spider, The Wheels on the Bus, Open Shut Them, etc.).
- Exaggerate facial expressions, change your tone of voice, and vary musical activities to keep your child interested.

Repetitive Sound Strings (6-9 months)

Once vocal play is established, add a DUPLICATED syllable that you have heard your child use in the past.

- When your child says “goo goo” respond by saying something similar such as “hi boo boo.” Playing with sounds makes language fun for your child. Before you continue, pause for a brief period of time and give your child a chance to vocalize so he gets a feel for the back and forth exchange of conversation.
- Expand your child’s repertoire of speech sounds by adding a new syllable or a syllable that you have heard your child use in the past. For example if your child’s says “ma” you can add a syllable to his existing repertoire and respond “maba.” Mixing sounds together to form a wide range of sound sequences is the next step in your child’s acquisition of language.

Responding to Gestures (6-9 months)

Your child learns new skills by observing others and imitating what they do. Gestures are a non-verbal means of communicating. Your child needs to respond to gestures before he is able to use them to communicate. Using frequent gestures as we speak helps your child understand our message.

- Pair newly presented words and gestures with specific activities so that your child becomes familiar with hearing the word and seeing the gesture combined.
- Use gestures in many situations throughout your child’s day (e.g., meals, dressing, play, traveling, etc).
- Point to specific rooms as you say, “Go to the bathroom/your room.”
- Extend your arms to your child as you say, “Come here.”
- Use gestures that occur naturally in your child’s daily routines. Use those same gestures in a variety of situations. Raise your hands up when asking your child, “Do you want to be picked up?” Pat the chair as you say, “Junior, come sit down.” Extend your hand with your palm up as you say, “Give me.”
- Repeat the word “up, up, up” while bouncing your child up and down on your lap, jumping up and down, pretending to fly a plane, throwing a ball up and catching it, or when it is time to get up from a chair/out of the crib.

Responding To “No” (6-9 months)

- Firmly say “No” when your child is touching or doing something that is not allowed.
- Be consistent and committed to following through. Remember, it is also important to teach your child acceptable behavior. Children often tests limits. Therefore, this technique will have to be repeated again and again (and again and again!).
- Always praise your child, even for the briefest cessation of the undesired activity (e.g., “Good Listening!”).
- Say “No,” then physically remove your child from the situation.
- Use a touch or a soft squeeze to inhibit your child from continuing.
- Shake your head from side to side to indicate “no” and/or move your finger from side to side as you re-enact the undesired activity.
- Point to the object your child is not supposed to be touching while saying/gesturing “No!” In a firm, strong voice

Sharing Attention with Adults (6-9 months)

- “Plug In” and go along with what your child is interested in.
- Have close face to face contact while engaged in the activity.
- Share in the things your child enjoys and identify his focus of attention. Activities may include clapping to music, shaking a rattle, “Peek-a-boo,” and playing with other various toys.
- Discontinue the activity for a few seconds to see if your child will initiate the interaction. Continue the activity using gestural, contextual, verbal and physical prompts to guide your child.
- Reduce cues as your child begins to share attention with you.

Vocalizing For Attention (6-9 months)

During infancy, children coo and then begin to vocalize randomly. As speech continues to develop, those same vocalizations start to display communicative intent. Children also become more aware of others responses, so if your child produces a sound and is positively reinforced, they are likely to produce the sound again.

- Encourage interactions with your child.
- Pretend to ignore sounds, giving him a chance to bring your attention to it (e.g., turn the radio on very loud, let the phone continue to ring several times before answering it).
- Place your child’s favorite toys out of reach.
- Take out a snack but wait for him to vocalize before offering the snack.
- The closer you are to your child, the more likely it is that he will respond. Vary the distance once your child starts to vocalize consistently.

Vocalizing When Spoken To (6-9 months)

- Establish and maintain eye contact when talking to your child. It is an important cue in interactions that indicates to others that we are interested and listening to what they are saying.
- Be animated and over-exaggerate vocal and facial expressions.
- Children tend to love music. Singing songs and nursery rhymes are a great way to introduce a wide range of speech sounds.
- Vary your pitch and melody while singing.
- Pause every now and then to give your child a chance to respond.
- Smile, praise, talk, and hug your child to encourage responses.

Imitating Then Initiating Waving (9-12 months)

Hellos and goodbyes offer children opportunities to build positive, trusting relationships with children and families.

- Make sure you say hello and goodbye to your child and family members every day.
- Wave “hi” and “goodbye” when entering and leaving the room.
- Wave “hi” and “goodbye” at the beginning and end of a television show.
- Wave “hi” and “goodbye” when you are starting and finishing reading a book.
- Wave “hi” and “goodbye” when you or someone else is entering and leaving your home.
- Wave “hi” and “goodbye” when taking out and then cleaning up toys.

Increasing Responsiveness to Name (Responds to name 9-12 months)

- Call your child’s name frequently as you enter the room, call for his attention as you approach; pause briefly in between, allowing him the time to process and respond.
- Accompany your child’s name with a physical gesture such as turning his head toward you, waving or clapping your hands. Early on, children begin to associate sounds with people, objects and even situations.
- Accompany your child’s name with a particular sound from a favorite toy or music from a favorite show or tape.
- Exaggerate your gestures, vocal pitch and melody when calling his name. Children begin to understand meanings of words by the tone of your voice and look on your face. Children gather information by looking, listening and touching. This helps them organize and become more aware of the world around them.
- Vary the distance between you and your child as you begin to teach this skill. Start by calling his name from a short distance then gradually move farther away and to different areas in the room.

- Gently guide your child’s face toward yours with your hand as you call him. Bring an interesting object (e.g., food, puppet, toy) to your face while calling his name.
- Use your child’s name when singing familiar finger play songs to him (e.g., “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider, Junior climbed up the water spout” or “The wheels on Junior’s bus go round-and-round”).

Locations (9-18 months)

The words that define relationships in space are called spatial concepts. These words help us to find and describe the location of something. Children can learn these words in their daily routines and interactions.

- Place toys in different locations (e.g., in the box, under the chair, on the table, between the books, behind the door, next to the doll, near the doll, near the refrigerator, up/down stairs, etc).
- Play hide and seek with your child’s favorite toys, then give hints including location words (e.g., “I think your ball may be under the couch).
- Use puzzles, sorters, trucks and other toys where your child can put things in, and take them out.
- Help your child to clean up his toys (e.g., place books on the shelf, toys in the toy box, push chairs under the table, etc.).
- While doing these activities guide your child’s hand to help him place objects in different locations.
- Point to the object once you have placed it in the desired location and verbalized the location of the object

Reaching To Be Picked Up (9-12 months)

Gestures are an important means of nonverbal communication, sometimes more powerful than words. The meaning and function of a gesture is very effective, maybe even more so than speech.

- Before lifting your child, raise your arms and say things like, “Up, up and away,” “Do you want to go up?” and “Up we go.” After providing the model, give him a few seconds to respond with the appropriate gesture. If he does not respond then provide hand over hand assistance by using your hands to lift his.

Repeat the gesture and decrease the use of the model until your child uses the gesture independently

Following 1 Step Directions (12-18 months)

- Include your child in daily routines, play activities and chores.
- Ask him to do things with you and for you. Your child may initially need gestures and contextual cues to understand and follow simple directions. Providing situations that will give your child hints about what is expected can be helpful as well.
- Give your child a baby doll and a bottle and say, "Feed the baby."
- Roll a ball to your child and say, "Roll it back to me," with your arms extended.
- Point to a cup on the table and say, "Give me the cup," while extending your hand.
- Make sure your directions are clear (e.g., "Get the ball", rather than "Get it.").
- Make sure directions are brief (e.g., "Get the ball", rather than "Go over there and bring the ball back over here.").
- Remember to praise your child as he responds correctly by smiling, hugging, and giving verbal praise such as "Good job."

Greetings (12-18 months)

- During the course of your child's day, wave and say "hi," and/or "bye" each time someone enters or leaves the room.
- Say "hi" when taking out toys and "bye" when you are putting them away.
- Say "bye-bye" at the end of a book or television show.
- Look out the window and say "hello" as people approach and "bye-bye," as they pass.
- Play "Peek-a-boo," and/or "Hide and Seek" with your child. Say "bye-bye" as you hide and "hi" as you peek out.
- Model greetings throughout the day. Ask your child to greet people as they come and go.
- Re-enforce your child's greetings with verbal praise, (e.g., "good talking") and give your child a hug.
- Prompt your child to respond to the greetings of others, using the above techniques.

Identifying Body Parts (12-24 months)

- Play fun, interactive games with your child while pointing and labeling body parts.
- Start with more common body parts (e.g., feet, hands, belly) then move on to more advanced body parts (e.g., fingers, elbow, knee, etc.).
- Guide your child's finger to the body parts you label.
- Sing songs, such as "If You Are Happy and You Know It" (touch your nose; clap your hands; stamp your feet) and move or touch the body part as you label it.

- Point to body parts on animals, characters and people as you look through books and photographs of family members.
- Bathing and dressing are good daily activities to make your child more aware of his body parts.
- As you wash your child, label the body part that you are washing.
- As you place the articles of clothing on him, label each body part as you are placing the clothing on.
- Using a mirror can be very helpful and interesting to your child because it increases self-awareness.

Pointing (12-18 months)

Pointing is the most basic and simplest means of communication. For most people, it is an effective method of communicating regardless of the language you speak.

- Point at various objects throughout your child's day to day activities.
- When bathing, point to your his head, nose, legs, belly, eyes, etc, and label them.
- Take your child's index finger and point to the various body parts, as you guide his hand; do the same with dressing as you point to the various pieces of clothing.
- Take walks with your child and point to things (near and far) that you see and hear. Then label them.
- Point to people in photographs such as friends and family members.
- Point to food in the grocery store, in the refrigerators, cabinets or on the table.
- Sing finger play songs that incorporate pointing (e.g., "Willabee Wallobee").
- Model pointing throughout the day.
- Give your child choices by presenting two objects, (one more desirable than the other) then ask, "Do you want _____ or _____?" Reward your child's pointing by giving him the desired item.

Recurrence (12-18 months)

The word "more" is a very functional word for children starting at an early age. It can be used as a general request for more toys, food or even to perpetuate a desired activity.

- Play interactive games that your child enjoys. Stop, look at your child and wait for a response.
- Give him a favorite snack, one small piece at a time. Pause and wait for your child to ask for more.
- Stack a tower of blocks then knock them down. Give your child one block and hold the others, pausing to prompt him to respond/request.
- Withhold desired objects throughout the day. Model responses when necessary (e.g., "More cookie"; "More blocks").

- Ask your child, “What do you want?” Encourage him to respond by using models, delayed models and partial cues.
- Verbally praise your child’s appropriate responses, re-enforce the use of recurrence by giving him the desired items.

Responding To “Wh” Questions (12-18 months)

“Wh” questions include: What, Who, When, Why and How. Everyday experiences are the building blocks for learning how to respond to them.

- Present your child with developmentally appropriate “wh” questions. “What” and “Where” questions are usually the easiest to answer, and “Who” and “Why” are more difficult.
- It is much easier for your child to answer a question when there is a visual and contextual cue such as an object, picture or person that you are asking the question about.
- Ask your child simple questions while engaged in day-to-day routines such as dressing, bathing, mealtime, playing, reading books, and pointing to pictures.
- Use questions along with interactive games and activities (e.g., place a blanket over your head and say “Where’s mommy?”).
- Place items in front of your child and then gradually increase the distance until it is out of reach and eventually out of sight. Ask questions such as, “What do you want?” or “Where’s ____?” and then model the correct response.
- Ask questions about people, objects, and situations that your child is most interested in and familiar with.
- Use hand over hand assistance to help your child respond to the question.
- Model the appropriate response.
- Reinforce any gesture such as looking, reaching or pointing.
- Verbally exaggerate the question and emphasize a word that will give your child a hint (e.g., Where is the ball?).

Using Objects Appropriately (12-18 months)

Normal daily routines allow many opportunities to help teach your child the proper use of objects.

- Show your child how objects are used by demonstrating their use during play and other everyday activities (e.g., with a wash cloth, towel, toothbrush, comb, spoon, cup, ball, car, shoe, phone, etc).
- While bathing, wash your child’s face with a washcloth. When finished with the bath, take a towel and dry your child. Brush your child’s hair and teeth.
- During mealtime, take a cup or spoon and bring it to your child’s mouth.
- During play, feed a baby with a bottle, throw a ball, push a car back and forth.

- While dressing, put shoes and socks on your child's feet.
- Use hand over hand assistance to help guide your child to use objects the way that they are meant to be used.

Word Approximations (12-18 months)

Early on, children become aware that their voices and sounds can be used to manipulate the world around them. This is the first sign of meaningful speech. Before using actual words, your child will begin to associate sounds with objects, people, and events. These productions eventually become close approximations or true words.

- Engage your child in reciprocal vocal play (give and take) during feeding, bathing, or playing.
- Imitate your child's sounds.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes, emphasizing key words.
- Hesitate before a word, giving your child an opportunity to fill it in.
- Read books and label the pictures, then point to a picture and provide your child the first sound of the word label, giving him the opportunity to complete it (e.g., point to a picture of a ball and say, "Buh").
- Narrate your child's play and daily activities. Help him to put his words to objects, actions and people.
- Respond to your child's vocalizations and/or verbalizations, even if they do not sound anything like actual words.
- Positive reinforcement will encourage your child to do it again.

Animal Sounds (18-24 months)

Animal sounds are often easiest for children to make because they don't have a lot of consonants. Children tend to produce the sound an animal makes before saying its actual name.

- Sing songs such as "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."
- Look through picture books of animals.
- Play with animal toys.
- Produce the appropriate animal sounds as you point to the pictures.
- Encourage your child to imitate the sound associated with the animal you point to.
- Repeat the sounds often and pause to allow your child to respond.

Asking Simple Questions/Using A Rising Intonation (18-24 months)

- Ask your child questions frequently throughout the day (e.g., “What do you want?”; “What are you doing?”; “Where are you going?”).
- Expand on your phrase (e.g., When your child says “cat go?” you say, “Where did the cat go?”).
- Put your child’s favorite things into a grab bag. Shake it up. Ask questions about the game, and invite him to respond.
- Present your child with only a few of the items used to complete a task. Turn your palms up and shrug your shoulders. Wait for him to respond.
- Look through picture books and take turns pointing to each picture saying, “What’s that?”
- Start an activity without using words to see if it will prompt your child to ask a question.
- Have your child repeat questions that you model.
- Create opportunities throughout the day that will encourage your child to ask questions.

Distinguishing Part/Whole relationships (18 -24 months)

- Verbalize to your child as you point out parts of larger objects (e.g., wheels of a car, nose of a person, tail of a horse, legs of a chair, door of a car).
- Present your child with various objects or pictures (especially his favorite toys, animals, and photographs of family members).
- Use a Mr. Potato Head as it has many removable body parts (point to each and name them).
- Talk about the many different parts of a person, toy, or object. As you present these objects to your child have him touch the different parts of the item as you label them.

Going To Specific Rooms On Request (18-24 months)

- Take your child on a “tour” of the house. As you enter each room, name it as well as a few of your child’s favorite things in the room.
- Have your child arrange pieces in appropriate rooms of a dollhouse.
- Ask your child to retrieve objects from the “proper” room that only that item would be located (e.g., cup from the kitchen).
- Guide your child toward the room named, as you are approaching the room, point toward it give your child verbal hints (the contents of the room, any distinctive characteristics).

Jargon Interjected With True Words (18-24 months)

Babbling is a normal part of language development. These productions eventually emerge into more purposeful vocalizations and then into true words. Children try to engage their parents in conversation using their babble. Parents often say that it sounds like their child is speaking another language. These vocalizations are called jargon. There’s a good chance that your child has tried to convey a message and

has become frustrated when you couldn't figure out what he was saying. Children will try to engage their parents in conversation using their jargon.

- Listen as your child vocalizes.
- Respond to these vocalizations as if you understand them.
- Repeat back to your child (using words) what you think has said.
- Use changes in vocal patterns and inflections as you speak to your child.
- Maintain eye contact with your child. This is an important indicator in any interaction or conversation that the person is interested and listening to what you are saying.
- Respond to your child's attempt to communicate.
- When a child's vocalizations are met with a response, they become excited and will likely continue the back and forth exchange. Your child will eventually learn from your modeling and interject words within the jargon.

Look to the "BOOK HOOK" (Attending to simple stories 18-24 months, 5-10 minute story 24-30 months, 20 minute story 30-36 months)

Reading is an interactive based activity where one creates meaning and/or gains knowledge through oral, visual or written text. Children may not initially understand what you are reading but it is a way of stimulating your child's senses and helping to create a love for books. Reading is a means of acquiring language, communication and sharing information and ideas. When reading books have exciting and interesting books available, let your child select a book of his choice. Also, it is important to match the way you present the book with your child's developmental level. For example, at first, turn pages relatively quickly and just comment on pictures. Then, as Junior's attention and comprehension improves, read one or two words per page, then read one or two sentences per page, and finally read the full text on each page. Ask your child questions about the objects and actions in the stories.

Possession & Possessives (18-30 months)

- Ask your child questions throughout the day about people's possessions (e.g., "Who's _____ is this?").
- Model the response if necessary (e.g., "This is daddy's _____;" "This is my _____;" "This is Junior's _____.").
- Look at photographs and talk about who is doing what in the pictures.
- Allow your child to help you put the clothes away after doing laundry.
- Label the clothes by whom they belong to (e.g., "Mommy's shirt, Daddy's socks, Junior's pants").
- During a play activity, hold up your child's favorite toy and say, "This is my ball," look toward him and wait for a response.

- Put a photograph of your child’s family members on the outside of a box. Place several of their belongings in each. Encourage your child to help you. Hold up one object at a time. Ask him, “Whose is this?” If he does not respond, point to the picture of the family member, pause, then model the appropriate response (e.g., Daddy’s sock).

Recognizing the Names of Others (18-24 months)

- Use people’s names frequently while making eye contact and gesturing toward the person being named (e.g., Have grandma ask, “Where is Mommy?” while pointing and looking to Mommy).
- Use songs/games with names (e.g., “The Itsy-Bitsy Mommy climbed up the water spout” “The wheels on Mommy’s bus go round-and-round”).
- Look into a mirror and physically touch a specific person while using that person’s name. The reflection in the mirror will provide your child with visual feedback.
- Pair a person’s name with various interesting noisemakers (e.g., bell, whistles). It is important to observe how a child responds to certain sounds. Make sure to use sounds that the child enjoys and not one that he fears.

Referring To Self By Name (18-24 months)

Children use the name you choose for them for life. Your child will be known on the playground, in school, and on his first job interview by the name you choose for him.

- Sit with your child in front of the mirror. Emphasize his name as you point to the reflection. After repeating the activity, ask your child, “Who is this?” as you point to the mirror. Exaggerate your inflection and vocal patterns to keep your child interested.
- Play silly games such as “Peek a Boo,” or “Hide and Seek.” Ask, “Where is Junior?” which enables your child’s name to be heard frequently.
- Talk on a play telephone. Greet your child by saying “Hi Junior”, “Bye Junior” and “How are you Junior?”
- Show your child a photograph of himself. Point to the picture. Ask, “Who is this?”
- Teach him to respond to the question, “What is your name?” (Model the response). Use visual and physical prompts to help elicit a response. Have family members and friends ask your child, “What’s your name?” Praise and reinforce your child each time he says his name spontaneously

Responding to Yes/No Questions (using words or gestures) (18-24 months)

- During your child’s play activities and daily routines, give him many opportunities to make choices.
- Ask your child questions that require a “yes/no” response. Begin with “yes/no” questions that you know he knows the answer to. Repeat (and answer) the question if necessary.

- Ask silly questions where the answer is obvious (e.g., Show your child a picture of a ball and say, “Is this a dog?” (If he doesn’t respond, you provide the correct answer).
- Stress your response by exaggerating your voice and by making playful facial expressions.
- Move your child’s head to nod “yes” or shake “no.”
- Provide your child with a model and appropriate response. Point to the object or person used in the question asked.

Saying First and Last Name (says own first name 18-24 months) (First & last name 30-36 months)

- Talk on the play telephone with your child. Introduce yourself with your first and last name, than ask him “Who’s this?” If your child only gives the first name, say “Junior what?”
- Play with action figure dolls or puppets. Give each a first and last name, and then ask your child their names.
- Introduce family members and friends, using both first and last names.
- Address and greet your child using both first and last name.
- Call your child by the incorrect name. Say “Hi, Mary Jane,” and pause to see if he responds. Then say, “You’re not Mary Jane, you are Junior” (give his first and last name).

Shaking The Head “No” & Saying “No” (18-24 months)

The word “no” indicates refusal, rejection or disapproval. Shaking your head from side to side is an action which nonverbally conveys the same meaning.

- Physically remove/redirect your child away from inappropriate activities. Shake your head “No”, and accompany the gesture with the word. Consistently say “No” and shake your head in various situations (e.g., to protest, to indicate refusal, to deny/decline).
- Use firm touch, shake your head “No” and say “No” when your child is taking a “forbidden” object. Remove “forbidden” objects from your child’s hands, shake your head “No” and say “No.”
- Give him many opportunities to indicate “No” with a shaking head, or saying the word “No” by providing your child with choices throughout the day (e.g., “Do you want ___?”).
- Offer your child two objects (e.g., two foods, two toys), one of which is a favorite and the other less desirable. Give him the less desirable one first, providing the opportunity to reject it.
- Offer undesirable options which you know he will reject (e.g., “Do you want to go to sleep?”).

Understanding Groups (18-24 months)

Your child’s ability to group is very important in organizing and making sense of his surroundings. It helps him to gather familiar information and take in new information.

- Organize toys by categories in different bins/areas (e.g., cars with cars, blocks with blocks).

- Prompt your child to help put away toys in their appropriate place.
- Place one object from each category into a bin so your child has a visual cue or label the bin with a picture of the object that belongs in it.
- Read books to your child on animals, transportation, foods, etc.
- Allow your child to help put away the laundry (e.g., socks in the draw, shirts in the closet, etc).
- Ask your child to help put away the groceries (e.g., snack in the cabinet, fruits in the draw, and vegetables in the bin).
- Talk about and describe the various objects and why they belong in the same group.
- Have your child help put the groceries away (e.g., snacks in the cabinet, fruits in the drawer, vegetables in the bin).
- Talk about and describe the various objects and why they belong in the same group.
- Label the categories that each item belongs to (e.g., pants, shirts, and hats are all clothes).

Verbalizing Along with Story Telling (18-24 months)

- Leave out certain parts to see if he notices. Pause, and look at your child, to prompt a response.
- Read your child books over and over again.
- Change the story slightly.
- Call the characters by the wrong names.
- Point to the pictures in the book and describe what is going on.
- Make up your own stories and characters; include your child's friends and family members.
- Prompt him to give input and include it in the story.
- Pause during the course of the story, giving your child a chance to talk. If he does not respond, elicit a response by asking a question, than model the response if necessary.

Adding the "ING" Word-Ending (24-30 months)

- Talk to your child about daily experiences and activities throughout the day.
- Narrate your child's actions. This will help him incorporate verbs with the "ing" ending (e.g., running, crying, walking, eating, sleeping, playing).
- Ask your child questions that will elicit an "ing" response (e.g., "What are you doing?"). Model the response if necessary and have your child imitate you, than repeat his response.

Descriptive Words (24-36 months)

- Use descriptive words to expand on what your child says (e.g., if your child says “ball,” you say “big ball”).
- Model descriptive words throughout your child’s daily routines (e.g., during diaper changes, “dirty diaper”; during mealtime, “hot soup” or “I’m hungry”; during bath time, “little toe, big toe, wet, water”; during playtime, “red blocks, big blocks, square blocks”).
- Look through your child’s favorite books. Point to pictures and describe the objects, actions, and people.
- Find a book of opposites (e.g., big shoe, little shoe, long hair, short hair, hot fire, cold ice cream).
- Give your child choices (e.g., “Do you want the big ball or the little ball?”).
- Place various objects in a grab bag. Have your child pick one object at a time and describe it.
- Prompt your child to use descriptive words by asking questions about the objects, such as “What color is it? Is it big or little? How does it feel?”
- Take walks with your child. Children love to be outside. Describe how you feel (e.g., “I’m cold”, “I’m hot”, “I’m hungry”). Describe what you see (e.g., green grass, big tree, pretty flowers), and describe what you hear (e.g., loud fire engines, chirping birds, crying babies).

Emotion Words (24-36 months)

- Label emotions as they relate to various situations.
- Describe how you feel (e.g., happy, sad, angry) as you engage in different situations.
- Tell your child why you are feeling the way you do (e.g., “I’m sad because ____.”).
- Ask how your child how he feels throughout the day.
- If he does not respond, give choices such as, “Are you happy?” or “Are you sad?” Repeat your child’s response.

Engaging in Brief Conversation (24-36 months)

- Give your child opportunities to engage in social interactions with adults and peers such as setting up playgroups with friends and family members.
- Talk to your child throughout the day.
- Elaborate and expand on what your child says.
- Model conversations with adults and peers.
- Prompt your child to greet people, ask your child questions, describe objects, convey messages and recall experiences.
- Instruct your child to use language, even if you have to tell him what to say.

Following 2-Step Related Directions (24-30 months)

Once your child has mastered following simple 1-step directions, begin to give him more complex demands. These demands can involve simple 2-step but related directions with 1 object (e.g., “Get the tissue and wipe your nose.”).

- During mealtime say, “Junior, get the napkin and wipe your face.”
- During bath time say, “Junior, get the soap and wash hand.”
- During dressing say, “Junior, get your shoes and put them on your feet.”
- While playing with your child say, “Junior, get the ball and roll it to me.”

Naming Categories (24-30 months)

- Organize your child’s toys into categories by placing them in different bins (e.g., cars with cars, blocks with blocks).
- Have him help put away the toys in their appropriate bin.
- Read books to your child on animals, transportation, foods, etc.
- Allow your child to help put away the laundry (e.g., socks in the drawer, shirts in the closet, etc.).

Narrating Play (30-36 months)

- Encourage your child to engage in pretend play.
- Talk to the various dolls, characters, animals, figures or puppets as your child is playing with them.
- Pretend the toys and characters are talking to your child.
- Have him give the toys directions and ask your child questions.
- Talk about what you are playing with, where they are going, what they are doing.

Prepositions (24-30 months)

- During play activities, place your child’s blocks on top of each other, animals in the barn, trains under and over a bridge and through a tunnel.
- Present your child with directions that involve location (e.g., put the ball in the box, put the block under the chair, put the ball next to the chair). Help him place the objects in the correct location. Then ask, “Where is the block?” Model the response for your child if necessary and point to the location of the object.
- Have your child help with cleanup (e.g., put the blocks on the shelf, put the cars in the bin, and put crayons in the box).
- Play “Find the Objects.” Hide objects around the room, and give your child directions on how to find them.

Pronouns (24-30 months)

- Use proper nouns and pronouns when looking at photographs of family members and at pictures in books.
- Model the use of pronouns several times throughout the day (e.g., “This is mine,” “This is his,” “This is hers,” “That is yours”).
- Show a photograph of yourself and your child. Say “That’s you,” as you point to a picture of your child, and “This is me,” as you point to a picture of yourself. Then ask your child “Who is this?” and point to one of the pictures. Model the response.
- Play turn-taking games. Say to your child, “My turn,” “Your turn,” “His turn,” “Her turn,” Then ask him, “Whose turn is it?”
- Present your child with a favorite snack and say, “Who wants one?” Model responses such as “Me!” or “I do!”, “He does!” or “She does!”
- Introduce various items that belong to different people. Ask who the items belong to and model responses. Then use delayed models, partial cues, (say the initial sound of a word), and eventually eliminate all prompts.

Recalling Past Events (30-36 months)

- Provide your child with meaningful, communicative opportunities. The best materials are those that are interesting to your child. Some of his favorite activities may include taking walks, arts and crafts, cooking, interactive games such as “Peek-a-boo,” “Hide and seek,” watching television, or physical play. These activities can be represented with sentences and simple drawings.
- Parents can draw pictures and write 1 or 2 sentences about something that happened during your child’s daily routines (e.g., ate pancakes for breakfast; went to McDonald’s; watched television).
- Have your child color portions of the pictures and add details to it. Ask him to retell the events that happened throughout the day.
- Increase the time between each event. This will also increase the difficulty of recalling that particular activity.
- Watch a favorite television show with your child. Ask questions about each scene and have him retell the portion of the story between commercials. At the end of the show have your child try to recall the story.
- Similar activities can be used while reading books. Ask your child questions, from one page to the next, after a few pages, or once you have finished the entire story. You can prompt his responses by asking simple questions, and giving hints.

Telling Experiences (24-36 months)

- Talk to your child about day to day experiences.
- Respond enthusiastically to anything that he might have to say.
- Ask probing questions about your child's experience (e.g., "What did you do at the park?"; "Who did you go to the park with?").
- Ask your child open-ended, general questions (e.g., "Where did we go today?"). Then ask more specific questions to help your child recall more of the experience (e.g., "What did you like better, the swing or the slide?").
- If he does not spontaneously express the experiences, give choices (e.g., "Did you play ball at the park?" or "Did you go on the swings at the park?").

Understanding (And Describing) The Function Of Objects (30-36 months)

One of the first object associations children make is that between an object and its use. When observing your child play, you will often see evidence that he understands this relationship. For example a child may pick up brush and brush his hair. When teaching your child to identify an object by its function, first you need to make sure that he knows what the object is and how it is meant to be used. Present your child with various familiar objects.

- Place 3 objects at a time in front of your child and ask him to "Show you the one that you..."
Brush your hair with (brush), Drink from (cup), Wear on your feet (shoe), Feed the doll with (bottle or spoon), Cut the paper with (scissors), Brush your teeth with (toothbrush), Sweep with (broom), Wipe your face with (napkin), Talk on (phone), Color with (crayon)
- When teaching your child to verbalize the function of an object, follow the above techniques. Describe the objects and what they're used for. Then present the object to your child and ask, "What do you do with a _____?" (e.g., what do you do with a brush? We brush our hair with a brush. Model the appropriate response).

Understanding And Labeling Actions/Verbs (24-36 months)

Verbs are action words. They are particularly fun to teach a child because you and your child can act them out.

- Use physical prompts to assist your child to perform these actions.
- Narrate the action as it is performed. Children usually enjoy physical play, so use words to describe his actions: Running in the park, Smiling at you, Climbing on the couch, Jumping up and down, Pushing a bike, Drinking juice, Playing with toys, Pulling a wagon, Digging in the sand, Drawing/Coloring with crayons, Crying, Playing music, Kicking/catching/throwing a ball, Dancing, Riding in a wagon/car, Washing and splashing in the bathtub, Eating a cookie, Holding a cup, Crawling/Walking/Jumping, Resting in bed, Waving "Hi" or "Bye", Swinging on a swing, swinging a bat, Sleeping in bed, Reading a book, Hugging/Kissing, and Talking/Singing.

Understanding And Labeling Colors (30-36 months)

- Start with primary colors (e.g., Red, Yellow, and Blue).
- Select objects that are different only by color (e.g., crayons, blocks, pegs). Have your child sort the objects by color first to make sure he can tell the difference between the colors (e.g., all red objects in the red box, yellow objects in the yellow box, blue objects in the blue box).
- Verbally label the color of the objects as you place them in the appropriate box.
- Remove the colored items from the boxes and place them in piles.
- Give your child one of the objects and label it (e.g., “Here is the blue block”). Ask for it back (e.g., “Give me the blue block”).
- Reward your child and reinforce the color-concept (e.g., “Thank you for the blue block”).

You can use several fun activities to teach your child his colors:

- Arts and crafts (e.g., pasting colored circles on paper, coloring with crayons, painting, etc).
- Building with colored blocks/Lego’s.
- Placing colored pegs into a peg board.
- Sorting laundry (e.g., blue jeans, white socks).
- Mealtime (e.g., red apple, green beans, yellow corn).
- Taking a walk (e.g., picking up green leaves, pointing to all the blue cars, red fire engines).

Understanding Differences (24-36 months)

- Talk about how objects are the same and how they are different. What makes them the same or different? Is it the color, shape, size, function, etc?
- Show your child 2 items that are identical or very different from one another. Describe what makes them that way.
- Present your child with several objects all of which are the same except for one (all spoons and an apple). Observe how your child explores the objects. Have your child place all the same objects in one container and the one that’s different into another.
- Ask him place an object in the container with the others that are the same (e.g., spoons with spoons, forks with forks).
- You can teach your child the concept of “same” and “different” throughout the day. While playing with toys give your child several blocks and a ball. During mealtime, give him several spoons and a cup. While dressing, give your child several socks and a hat.
- Increase the complexity of the concept by presenting your child with several objects that are identical and one that differs slightly (e.g., 3 red blocks and a blue one; 3 toy trucks and 1 toy car).
- Group together various objects that are the same and those that are different. Point to the object that is different from the others. Give your child a description of the objects and explain to him why it is the same or different.

Understanding Quantity Concepts (24-30 months)

This technique can be used when teaching other quantity concepts as well (“all”, “some”, “rest of”) as well as comparisons (“more”, “most”, “least”).

- Throughout the day, ask your child to give you one of a given item when presented with several (one block, one car, one animal when playing, one book when reading, one cracker when eating, one cup, one napkin, one spoon when setting the table, one video when watching T.V., one diaper when time to be changed, one crayon when coloring).
- At first, give your child only one object at a time. Ask him to give you one block when only one is in view. This way your child will be successful. Then give your child several items. After he has selected one item, remove the rest.
- Use hand over hand guidance to assist your child to select one object from many.
- Present your child with examples of “one” and “many” (e.g., many blocks in one container and only one block in another).
- Hold up one of your child’s fingers and point to only one object.
- Present your child with one object and verbally emphasize the word “one.” Do not label the object.

Understanding “Big” And “Little” (30-36 months)

- Help your child locate items around the house and outdoors that are big and little.
- Present him with various objects that are big and little and place them in piles.
- Label the objects by size and name.
- Point out size differences in similar toys (e.g., “big car” and “little car”).
- Point out size differences in clothing (e.g., mommy’s socks, Junior’s socks).
- Point out different sized foods (a piece of bread and a cracker, a nectarine, and a grapefruit).
- Sort objects into a “big pile” and a “little pile”. As you place each object into the appropriate pile identify it by its size and name (e.g., the big sock, the little sock).
- Notice differences when you take walks (e.g., big trucks and little cars; big trees and little bushes).

Understanding “Long” and “Short” (30-36 months)

- Select 2 of the same items that are significantly different in length (long and short), (Long and short bubble wands, long and short paint brushes, train tracks that can be added to, long and short pieces of string, a Slinky that can be pulled long and “squished” short, pop beads that can be made longer by linking them together, blocks that can be placed next to each other to make a train, a long and short piece of spaghetti or licorice).

- Have your child watch as you add to or take away from each of the objects to change its length (e.g., pull the slinky to make it long then let it go to be short again).
- Draw a long line and a short one next to it.
- Have your child move a car along each long and short line.
- Put a long and short piece of string on the floor or use a piece of chalk and draw a long and short line outside. Have your child run, walk, or jump on each.
- Emphasize the length of objects during activities.
- Help your child locate objects that are long and short.
- Present your child with two of the same objects that differ only in length and place them into appropriate piles.
- Verbally exaggerate the length of the object as you name it (e.g., the short piece of string).

Using Comparatives (30-36 months)

- Collect objects, pictures, toys, etc. Make sure the items that you collect vary in weight, size, etc. Keep the objects in three's, so you can compare (e.g., small, smaller, smallest; big, bigger, biggest; heavy, heavier, heaviest).
- Describe the objects using comparatives (e.g., "This is a small ball, this ball is smaller than that one, and this is the smallest ball of all").
- Ask your child questions such as, "Which one is smaller? Which one is bigger? Which one is faster?"
- Talk to your child throughout the day using comparative terms to describe what you see and experience.

Using Irregular Past Tense (24-30 months)

- Elicit the use of past tense by asking your child about a recent experience (e.g., after going to the park ask, "Where did you go today?" or "What did you do at the park?").
- While playing with blocks, knock them down and say, "What happened to the blocks?"
- Do not criticize incorrect verb forms. If your child says, "I falled down," instead of "I fell down," restate what he has said in the correct way (e.g., Oh, you fell down).
- Use irregular past tense during appropriate situations throughout your child's day.

Using Plurals (24-30 months)

- Approach your child with multiple objects that are the same (e.g., blocks, shoes, cars). Hold up the objects and ask, "What are these?" Then hold up one and ask, "What is this?"
- Look through picture books. Ask your child to name single items and then point to multiples and ask him to name these items as well.

- Emphasize the “s” at the end of words.
- Use numbers when labelling objects (e.g., one block, two blocks).
- Model the use of plurals when necessary.
- Provide your child with as many opportunities to use plurals as possible throughout the day.
- For irregular plurals, model correct uses (e.g., mouse-mice). If your child says, “I see two mouses,” you say, “Oh, you see two mice?”
- Remember do not criticize your child’s incorrect responses. Rather, just rephrase it correctly.

Using Quantity Words (Understands concept of one and all 24-30 months)

- Present your child with multiple objects at one time. Count the objects along with your child. Combine counting words with the use of words such as more, most, few, some, rest, all.
- Read books to your child and look for pictures that have many items on one page. Ask him questions related to the quantity (e.g., How many? Show me one, two, etc.).
- Have your child help you collect various numbers of objects. Place them in piles. Point to the piles and ask questions related to quantities (e.g., which one has more? Which one has the most? Please give me some/all of _____).

Following 3-Step Directions (36-42 months)

As your child masters following 2-step directions, introduce 3 step commands involving 1 action and 3 objects, (e.g., Bring me the shoe, cup, and ball.) 3 actions and 1 object (e.g., “Get the cup, go to the kitchen, and put the cup in the sink.”) 3 objects that are related (e.g., “Put the baby doll on the chair and give her the bottle.”)

- Give your child cues such as pointing, reaching, or providing hand over hand assistance when necessary.
- Reduce and then eliminate these cues as your child becomes increasingly more successful.
- Remember to give positive reinforcement with all correct responses (e.g., verbal praise, high fives, hugs, smiles).

OTHER LANGUAGE INFORMATION & STRATEGIES

Articulation:

It is often a Mystery why children mispronounce words. Sometimes it’s simply a normal developmental phase, and sometimes it’s due to a physical difficulty (such as weak oral-motor muscle tone, language processing issues, or motor planning difficulties). Two things are important: (1) It is not unusual for a child to have difficulties with at least some sounds as language unfolds (3-year old children are expected

to be about 75% intelligible in spontaneous language use with adults that are not their parents), and (2) Standardized articulation testing and therapy is often not formally undertaken until a child is about 3 years old or beyond.

What to do: Acknowledge mispronounced words without punishing, but be sure to positively model: If your child says “Bup” for cup, do not reply, “No, it’s cup,” rather, simply say “Yes, cup.”

“Don't Balk at Self-Talk”

- Announce what you see, do, feel and hear, use “Parent-ese” when your child is near! For example, when doing laundry, describe your own actions: “Look at what Mommy is doing. Take clothes out; fold clothes; open drawer; put clothes away; shut the drawer; bye-bye clothes.”

Echo-Expansion Modeling

A technique known as “Echo-expansion modeling” involves repeating what your child says and then adding to it.

<u>YOUR CHILD</u>		<u>YOU SAY</u>
“Mommy”	à	“Mommy’s home”
“Up”	à	“Up please”
“Mommy go”	à	“Mommy’s going to work”
“We play car”	à	“We play with car together”

Do not correct your child for not using an incomplete sentence, rather expand on it and encourage him to do so. Modeling instead of correcting is the most effective way to teach your child about language.

Increasing Vocabulary

Children learn to understand word labels when they are used over and over again in their play and daily activities (e.g., mealtime, dressing, bathing). Developing a vocabulary occurs naturally when you talk about what your child sees, hears, and experiences. Regularly introduce new word labels.

- Introduce new words in different sentences and stress the words to draw attention to them.
- Consistently present the newly learned word labels in various situations.
- Label objects in your child’s environment.
- Label toys and actions during play with your child.

- Label foods and utensils during mealtime.
- Label clothes while dressing your child.
- Label objects used for bathing (e.g., soap, washcloth, towel).
- Take your child for walks and label what you see and hear (e.g., car, tree, plane, bird).
- Use names of people.
- Read books and label pictures of objects, actions, and descriptive words.
- Sing your child’s favorite songs.
- Label objects one by one as you give them to your child.
- Present the known object with 2 that are unfamiliar to your child.
- Provide the word label of the object and ask your child to retrieve it.
- Present your child with the object and narrate actions as the object is used.
- Present pictures of objects to help your child comprehend the word label in a more abstract form.
- Guide your child’s hand toward the object, toy, and person, as you label them.
- Show your child the objects in an animated manner as you label them.
- Point to, reach and turn your child’s head toward the objects or pictures labeled.
- Label and describe objects, people, and pictures.

“Karaoke”

Interjecting Words with Intonations to Sing Familiar Songs:

- Recite your child’s favorite nursery rhymes.
- Sing his favorite songs. Choose songs that have repetitive phrases, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” “Happy Birthday,” “Wheels on the Bus,” and “Old Macdonald.”
- Use finger play gestures and facial expressions as you sing the songs.
- Present your child with pictures and actions to go along with the rhymes and songs.
- Dance along to the rhythm of the songs.
- Hold your child’s hands and have him join you.
- Encourage your child to sing along.
- Stress key words in the songs. Pause and wait for your child to respond.
- Access a microphone (and if you can get a microphone with a tape recorder that’s even better).
- Use vocalizations to experience and enjoy feedback from your child’s voice.

“LEARNING by EARNING” (Not anticipating what your child wants)

By making things “too easy” or “too available” your child may not be motivated to try to use gestures or speak to communicate. (Hey all of you kind relatives, older siblings, and babysitters, this means you too!).

- Place desired objects out of your child’s reach but still within view.

- Don't anticipate your child's every need.
- Don't be so quick to refill an empty juice cup. Let your child make some attempt to tell you first.
- "Forget" to give your child a spoon at mealtime.
- Create absurdities (e.g., only put on one of your child's shoes). Wait for him to ask for the other.
- When you turn on the TV, intentionally leave the sound off.
- Give your child the opportunity to respond to each situation.

"Lights, camera, TALK!"

- Use a video camera during play activities, and then watch your child "light up" when the video is shown. This technique will increase his likelihood of imitating

"Mirror, Mirror on the wall, Help me talk as I grow tall!"

Use MIRRORS, children enjoy looking at their reflection in the mirror. They learn to explore and become more aware of themselves.

- Place your child in front of a mirror.
- Observe his reactions and expressions.
- Replicate any sounds, words or actions he uses.
- Once your child becomes aware that you are imitating him, it is likely that he will continue it.

A mirror can be used to improve a child's ability to imitate and model adults. A mirror can improve a child's awareness of oral -motor positioning. A mirror can be FUN!

"NO" means "NO" and "YES" means "GO"

Learning Yes and No:

- Use simple and consistent words.
- Follow your own "no" with immediate and consistent action (e.g., physical redirection, removal of an object) as opposed to an empty threat or inane question (e.g., "How many times have I told you? Don't make me come over there. Why don't you listen when I talk?").
- Follow your own "Yes" by immediately gratifying your child.
- Respect his "no" by backing off of an unimportant request (e.g., refusal to accept a cookie) and by acknowledging the "good talking."

“PARENTESE” & the K.I.S.S. Principle

Keep it simple:

- Talking to your child will help increase his vocabulary.
- Respond to your child’s gestures by accompanying his body language with words. This will help teach your child that words and actions go together.
- If you play “Simon Says” with your child, you probably wouldn’t get too complex and say, “Simon says do the opening scene from A Chorus Line.” Well, you are always playing “Simon Says” with your child’s language so remember to Keep It Simple Simon!
- One way to “keep it simple” is to use “parent-ese.” “Parent-ese” involves:
 - Speaking at a slower pace Pausing to give your child a chance to respond.
 - Using simple concrete nouns and actions
 - Shortening sentences
 - Repeating main points with minor variations (e.g., “Where is the ball? Good boy! You got the ball! Give me the ball.”).

Play “Dumb”

Delay your response to your child’s gestures.

A child’s first words are typically associated with objects, people and social interaction most important to them. When a child initially learns to speak, he says words that are most meaningful to him in order to get his point across. If you are unable to figure out what your child is saying then try to read his gestures but do not respond immediately. Play “Dumb” when your child requests something. (e.g., If your child gives you an empty juice cup, ask, “Do you want to go out? Do you want to eat? Do you want to watch TV”? Then, in a surprised manner say, “Oh, do you want juice?”).

Set Challenging Expectations

Regarding the use of language by their child, parents often wonder, “What should I expect?” Expect what you know your child is capable of plus just a tiny bit more! Set reasonable, yet challenging expectations.

- When you know your child is capable of gesturing to request, don’t fully respond to requests (for privileges) made with grunts or screams.
- When you know your child is capable of verbalizing to request, “hold-out” and don’t fully respond to gestures.

“THIS” IS A “MISS”: Fully Label Choices

By giving your child the chance to make choices you are creating an opportunity for him to have more control in their world.

- When giving your child choices, don't Say: “Do you want this or this?” While holding up two choices, instead fully label choices and say, “Do you want the apple (show the apple) or the banana (show the banana)?”

Use Finger Play “Choreography”

Children naturally love music. It is a very important part of learning. Music reinforces learning by encouraging interactions, developing new words, providing a way to express emotions and improving coordination through movement.

- Sing fun playful songs with your child. Then repeat these songs this time leaving out words for them to fill in. “The wheels on the bus go _____ - _____ - _____?” If your answer is “Round and Round” then you know first-hand the power of finger play songs

Use of Praise and Positive Reinforcement

Praising your child for something he has said or done will build self-esteem and confidence. These feelings are often influenced by a child's interaction with their family. Positive reinforcement will give your child the feedback he needs to help him make better sense of the world around him. Say “RAH, RAH, RAH!” for even a squeak, praise it cause your child's trying to speak!

- Praise efforts and sound/word approximations.
- “Catch” your child using sounds.
- Use nonverbal praise (smiles pats, high-fives, hugs, applause)
- Use verbal praise (e.g., “Good Talking!”)

Use PICTURES

- When looking at books with your child, talk about what's on the page and label the various objects, pictures and people you see.
- Family photo albums are a fun way for children to develop vocabulary.
- Use pictures to elicit language. For example, show your child photos and ask, “Who is in the picture?” “Where are you in the picture?” “What are you wearing in the picture?”

Use “OPEN” QUESTIONS

If you don't ask, he won't tell. For example:

YES/NO QUESTION	OPEN QUESTION
“Is the cat eating?”	“What is the cat eating?”

Even if your child does not yet verbalize responses, pose *open questions* and then you go on to answer the questions out loud to model an appropriate response.

Use “STALKING TALKING”

Your child is touching, seeing and walking; describe it and you are “Stalking Talking.”

- By narrating your child's activities, you are helping him put words to objects and actions. For example, describe your child's activities: “Junior is climbing up on chair. Uh oh, fell down! Getting up. Junior is sitting. Good Job!”
- When your child grunts/moans or screams, acknowledge his desires and needs, but be sure to provide the appropriate target word. Model the word again.
- Let your child know it's his turn by pointing to him. Turn-taking is a building block when children are learning to engage in conversation.