

# Ways to help your child's language skills

## (3 to 5 years old)

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Your child learns speech and language skills by talking and interacting with others. There are many ways you can help your child develop good communication skills.

### Play and language

- Spend time playing with your child each day. Play is an important way to help your child learn new skills, such as speech and language.
- Follow your child's lead. Let them choose what to play.
- Encourage activities that are on your child's level.
  - Your child may not want to do things that are too hard. Do things your child can already do.
  - Add new things only if your child can do them.
  - If your child stops, go back to something easier.
- Make eye contact during play. Get on a level that allows you to be face-to-face with your child.
- Imitate your child to encourage more playing. Play with toys the same way your child plays with them.
- Allow your child to be creative with toys. Avoid making them play by the manufacturer's rules.
- Ask your child to talk about what they are doing. If your child does not talk, you can talk about what is happening like, "You are petting the cat."
- Teach your child to take turns. When you finish a sentence, pause to let your child take a turn.
  - Wait for your child to respond with sounds, words or action.
  - Help your child learn to wait their turn by saying things like, "Wait. It is my turn."
- Take your child for a walk. Talk about what you see and hear.
- Avoid asking too many questions or giving commands. Say the names of things, talk about what is happening, and give more details about what you are doing instead.

### Books and language

- Try to read books every day with your child. Reading is one of the best ways to learn vocabulary, sentences and reading skills.
- Describe and name objects and actions as you read. Help your child talk about what they see. Ask your child who, what and where questions about what you are reading.
- Your child may want to read the same book many times. Read familiar books, and help them tell the story.
- Read nursery rhymes, and sing songs with your child. Do rhymes and songs that have finger and hand movements.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# Ways to help your child's language skills (3 to 5 years), continued

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## Everyday talking

- Use correct speech sounds and grammar when talking to your child.
- Help expand and improve your child's speech. If your child says, "That a big hou," respond by saying the sentence and stressing the correct words and sounds by saying, "That is a big house."
- Name things, and talk about what is happening during daily routines like bath time, meals and getting dressed.
- Make your child alert to sounds. Help your child listen to inside and outside noises, such as the phone ringer, the doorbell, an airplane and animal sounds.
- Repeat new words often. When your child wants to know the name of something, say the name. Then, use the word in different ways like, "Yes, that is a ball – a big, red ball. You throw and catch the ball."
- Talk to your child about things they like. Answer questions in short, simple sentences.
- Coach your child to tell you what they want. Try not to anticipate – encourage your child to use speech to have their needs met.
  - If you do not understand, try to restate what your child said – "juice in red cup?" – and wait for them to comment.
  - If you still do not understand, ask your child to show you what they want.
- Give your child time to answer. When you ask a question, pause to give your child time to think of a response.
- Remember that how you interact with your child is very important to their development.

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Therapist

Date

Time

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Phone number

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

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