



Ways to Increase Communication and Language

There are a variety of ways to increase communication depending on a child's age and ability level. Below are some ideas for increasing language and communication throughout the day.

1. Expand Sentence Length – When children answer a question or request an item using one or two words, increase their sentence length by repeating their answer with an expanded phrase. For example, if you ask a child, “Would you like orange juice?” and they answer “Yes,” model a longer response. “Yes, I would like orange juice.” Then have the child repeat the phrase.

2. Use Books for Language - Reading stories is an excellent way to incorporate language into a fun activity. Ask questions about the pictures, the story, and the characters. Even very young children can identify colors, gender, words, or concepts (e.g. the boy that is the *tallest/shortest*) by pointing to pictures. Have children predict what is going to happen next throughout the story. After finishing the book, review what happened in the story.

3. Create Situations that Promote Language - Favorite toys, clothes, and foods can motivate young children to use language. Store favorite items in eye sight, but out of reach, so children have to use their words to request the items.

4. Provide Choices – Give children choices in activities, stories, toys, and foods so they communicate their preferences. You can create an opportunity for communication even if you know a child is going to select a favorite story or game.

5. Find Time to Communicate – Many children like being entertained by technology, but opportunities for communication are lost when families spend a good deal of time watching television and playing video games. Turn off the television during meals and refrain from using portable video games in the car. Time spent together at the dinner table and in the car are wonderful opportunities for learning about a child's day and increasing communication and language skills.



Trying New Foods

6. Be Supportive – Children are more likely to communicate if they feel valued. Encourage language by listening attentively to children and asking them questions. If children answer questions incorrectly, teach them the correct answers using kind, supportive words. Repeatedly asking a question a child does not know how to answer or condescendingly correcting them can hurt their feelings and decreases the chance they will answer questions in the future. Instead, encourage them to say, “I don't know,” and use the situation as a learning opportunity.

7. Be a Role Model – Children learn from the adults around them. When adults speak in full sentences, use correct grammar, and articulate well, children hear and are reminded of how words and sentences should sound.

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