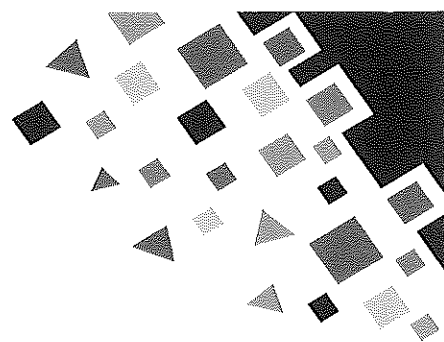


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December 2020

Dear Families,

2020 has been a remarkable year! I am very satisfied to have had the opportunity to play and grow with you and your family.

Winter is near and with the new season comes new language adventures with books.

Winter Theme: Transportation featuring the books *Goodnight Little Blue Truck* and *Little Blue Truck's Christmas* by Alice Schertle. These books are also available in Spanish. I look forward to explore feelings, weather, counting, holiday vocabulary and more during the next few months with you and your little one.

Parent Articles: featured on the *client portal* include:

Using Language to Get Results,

How Children Use Language to Satisfy Needs

Turn-taking and Conversation

Helping Your Child Learn to Ask and Answer Questions

Improve Your Child's Listening Skills

Improve Your Child's Memory Skills

You Tube Channel: AverhartCollins Speech Therapy youtube.com features *Goodnight Little Blue Truck* and *Little Blue Trucks Christmas* as read-a-long stories. Prior book selections are available for your little one to enjoy any time.

Pinterest: Please check out my Pinterest. It is filled with fun activities for you to enjoy related to our transportation theme.

Extra Bonus: Included in this mailing are:

1. *Goodnight Little Blue Truck* book by Alice Schertle.
2. *Goodnight Little Blue Truck* sequence activity by Fun with Books.
3. *Little Blue Truck's Christmas* story companion by Little Owl Academy

May Your Little One Always Love to Read,

Wanda Averhart Collins MA-CCC

Speech Language Pathologist



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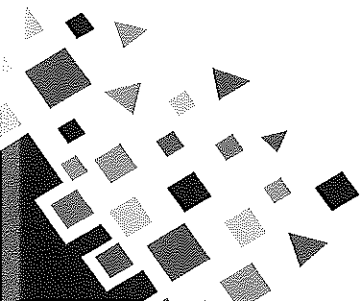
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Using Language to Get Results

by M. Ann Marquis, M.S., C.C.C.

Why do children communicate?
To get what they want!

Nonverbal Communication

The first step in influencing others is to get their attention. Before children learn to talk, parents respond to gestures, cries, or even sounds like grunts and moans. For example, pointing to a cookie is good communication for the child who can't say "cookie."

Children first learn to influence others by using nonverbal communication. A baby's cry, for example, is a request (or demand) for attention. It can bring a parent from another room. Crying is often a successful way to influence others.

Nonverbal communication, like speech, must be learned by trial and error and by getting results. Nonverbal communication is successful when parents do what children want them to do. Children often use the following nonverbal behaviors:

Child's Behavior	Child's Goal
Long sound	Asking for people, objects, animals
Abrupt, short sound	Getting attention
Look, grasp, point to people or objects	Getting person, object
Cry	Seeking comfort or food
Shakes head	Rejecting food, object, person

Verbal Communication

By the time children approach two years, the use of nonverbal communication should be giving way to using words. Words are much more effective. Instead of just pointing to a desired cookie, the child says "cookie." As the child develops more language, the pointing usually disappears because it is easier to just say "cookie."

Children who have difficulty learning language may continue to use nonverbal communication. They will fall back on gestures and sounds if their verbal requests are not understood.

If using language is difficult for your child and whining, crying, and gestures get results, there is little reason to talk. Children talk in order to get what they want. If your child can get a cookie by pointing to it, there really is no need to say "cookie." How can parents encourage children who prefer not to talk? Here is an example:

Child's Behavior	Parent's Language
1. Points at cookie.	"What do you want?"
2. Continues to point, and grunts.	"Do you want a cookie? Tell me cookie."
3. Says "tu."	"Yes, cookie. Here's your cookie."

In this sequence, the parent required an attempt at saying "cookie" before fulfilling the request. If the child could actually say "cookie," the parent would have asked for the correct word before delivering the cookie. Did you notice that the parent used the word "cookie" four times? By using the word in several different sentences it was clear which word was appropriate.

From Words to Conversation

The next stage for children who are learning to control their environment is to combine words. Just as you expected your child to say words instead of pointing, soon you can expect "orange juice" instead of "juice." In any stage of development, parents can help children control their lives by using language.

Children with language problems often need help labeling things and people. Words like "this" or "that," "here" or "there" are common in our language. But they have no meaning unless you know what your child is referring to. For example, a request like "I want that" is confusing if you don't know what "that" is. Whenever your child's communication is confusing, ask, "What do you want?"

How can you encourage conversation? Do things together with your child. Talk about what you're doing. Create new situations for conversations. Everything you do together is worth talking about. Take turns when talking. Use short sentences. Use language that is only slightly more difficult than your child uses. Tell your

child the words for objects or people that the child does not know.

Learning to Say "No"

Saying "no" is one of the most important concepts your child will learn. The ability to refuse, deny, and disagree helps children to control their environment in a straightforward way. Your child probably expressed "no" before learning to talk by pushing things away. Rejection of certain foods is a common occurrence in most families. These rejections are important around two years of age, when children start wanting to do things for themselves. This desire for independence is an important step of development.

How you respond when your child says "no" will determine whether the behavior will be used again. When your child does not like an object or person, tell the child you understand. Accepting your child's reasonable rejection of an object, food, or person will help the child become better at controlling the world.

How can parents help children use language to influence the world they live in?

1. When your child starts a conversation, give the child your full attention.
2. Depending on your child's language level, require that your child attempt sounds, words, or sentences. Ask your speech clinician what is reasonable to expect.
3. Show that you understand the word or phrase your child is attempting. Then fulfill the request if appropriate.

4. Pause after speaking. This gives your child a chance to continue the conversation.
5. Help your child put feelings, actions, and desires into words.
6. Encourage your child to give and take directions.
7. Help your child to use language to make choices.
8. Allow your child to verbally disagree.
9. Teach your child to greet people.
10. Play games with your child, especially games like "playing house." Your child can pretend to be a parent and practice telling you what to do.
11. Give your child choices like "Do you want soup or a sandwich for lunch?"
12. Set a good example for your child. Model clear, assertive communication.

Vocabulary

Nonverbal communication—Communicating without words, using gestures, facial expressions, body language, or tone of voice.

Model—To provide an example of good speech or other behavior; to demonstrate a desired response.

Refer to:

- 4.1 Learning New Words
- 4.6 How Children Use Language to Satisfy Needs
- 4.8 Help Your Child Learn to Ask and Answer Questions

How Children Use Language To Satisfy Needs

by M. Ann Marquis, M.S., C.C.C.

Introduction

Children talk for many reasons: to satisfy needs, to share feelings, to influence others, and to give and get information. To satisfy needs is probably the most important reason to talk. "Needs" include getting food, love, physical comfort, and help.

How do children learn to get their needs met? Children observe their environment. They see what works and what doesn't. They tune into your tone of voice and how you change it in different situations. They learn that a smile can get a positive response from you. They listen and watch, then imitate everything that you do. When your child begins to use words to help satisfy needs, the child learns that some ways of talking may be more effective than others. These ways include:

- Making indirect requests
- Using polite forms of speech
- Giving the listener adequate information

Making Indirect Requests

When your child is beginning to talk, satisfying a hunger pang can be accomplished simply by saying "apple." You know what your child wants and you probably give it.

As they grow, children become more aware of how people ask for things. They learn that directly asking for an apple does not work in all situations! Indirect requests are commonly used in our culture. Saying "My mother always lets me use the bathroom before lunch" is an indirect request. The development of indirect requests represents a growing awareness of what is socially appropriate.

By age three, some children begin to use indirect requests and hints to get what they want. By age seven, they have just about mastered the concept. Some preschool-age children and children with delayed language development do not understand how to use or recognize these hints. They may have trouble using indirect requests or understanding yours.

Younger children need more direct requests from you than do older children. A child whose language development is at the four- to five-year-

old level will not respond to "I wish your room was as neat as your sister's." To get results, say, "You need to pick up your toys now."

Using Polite Forms of Language

Children also need to learn certain effective ways of talking. They learn that the words "please" and "thank you" have a positive effect on the listener. They also learn to tailor their use of polite language to the needs of their listener. For example, "Gimme a bite" may work with a little brother, but not with parents.

It is important for children to learn polite forms of talking for two reasons. First, most adults prefer children who meet their standards of politeness. The child who is not polite may be labeled "rude" or a "troublemaker." Second, the development of polite language is a social skill. It is crucial to success in motivating others to meet the child's needs.

You can use everyday situations to help your child learn politeness. A conversation between you and your child might go like this:

Child: Tie shoe.

Parent: Do you want me to help you?

Child: (nods head)

Parent: You could say, "Please help tie my shoe."

Child: Please help.

Parent: Sure, I'll help you tie your shoe.

Polite forms of language are used to please the listener. They reflect the speaker's sensitivity to another person. Using polite forms of language is a necessary step in your child's social development.

Giving the Listener Adequate Information

Beginning at about age three, children learn to be specific about what they want. At this age, children realize that saying "I want the car" is better than "I want that." The word "car" gives the listener important, needed information. Being sensitive to the listener's needs is an important skill.

Children with language difficulties may let you know what they want through nonverbal means such as pointing or showing. First, these children need help learning vocabulary. Second, they need to learn about the listener's needs for adequate information. The following example shows how parents can teach their children to provide specific information:

Child: Him hit me! Him take it!

Parent: Who hit you?

Child: Bob.

Parent: Bob hit you. What did he take?

Child: My book.

Parent: Bob hit you and took your book.
Are you hurt?

The parent provided the vocabulary and clarified what the child said. The parent also let the child know that the original message did not contain enough information to be understood.

How Parents Can Help Their Child Use Language to Satisfy Needs

Help your child learn language at home, while shopping, or driving. Whenever possible, use daily activities as opportunities to teach language. For example, while helping you in the kitchen, encourage your child to request the utensils needed. If your child says something you do not understand, help the child find a clearer way to express the message.

Engage your child in conversations about what the child is doing whenever possible. If you don't understand your child, you can say "I didn't understand. Tell me more." Don't pretend to understand if you don't!

As you talk with your child, try to:

1. Give your child as many opportunities to talk as possible.
2. Help your child with words when the child is having trouble communicating.
3. Ask questions when your child has not given enough information.
4. Use softened requests and polite language whenever possible.
5. Be specific about what you are requesting.
6. Praise your child when communication has been clear.

Refer to:

- 4.5 Using Language to Get Results
- 4.8 Help Your Child Learn to Ask and Answer Questions

Turn-Taking and Conversation

by M. Ann Marquis, M.S., C.C.C.

Introduction

The goal of all good communicators is to speak clearly and comfortably in conversations with other people.

Conversations may begin without words. For example, a game of rolling a ball back and forth can be a conversation without words. Parent and child each take a turn. Sometimes a turn will be a nonverbal gesture indicating "Mine," "Go get it," or "Get ready." Later, when the child has developed words, the same game may include the verbal counterparts of the gestures. As children develop, words replace much *nonverbal communication*. Taking turns is a basic requirement of conversation. Turn-taking does not happen automatically. It is a skill that children must learn and practice. Ideally one person speaks, then the other person makes a comment or asks a question. Parents can help their child learn how and when to take turns in conversation.

Children can learn turn-taking before talking

Long before their child learns to talk, parents can help develop turn-taking skills. Common baby games such as "peek-a-boo" and "hide-and-seek" help prepare for learning conversational skills. A child's involvement in these "do it again" games is just as important as learning new sounds or new words, or learning how to put words into a sentence.

A child's early play with adults is important because it provides a routine that helps the child predict what will come next. This structure promotes learning and practice of turn-taking skills. For example, during the first games of "peek-a-boo," parents start the game and keep it going. The parents may hold their child's hands over the child's eyes and then remove them, saying "peek-a-boo."

Later, the child begins to be aware of how the game works. Now the parents can wait for their child's eyes to be covered. This allows the child to take a turn. It is now the child's responsibility to keep the game going. Parents can also expect their child to signal when ready to take a turn. This helps the child learn to use these important signals.

After early experiences with these communication games, the child has learned not only about speaker and listener roles, but also that these roles can be reversed. The child has learned that someone always has to take responsibility for starting an exchange, maintaining it, and ending it.

Conversations with your child

In adult conversation, your main goal is usually to take your turn to speak. In a parent-child conversation, your main goal is to get your child to take a turn. A good way to achieve this is for you to develop a conversational style with your child. Just as with adults, conversations with children are best when they include greetings, making comments, asking questions, and acknowledging personal worth.

Once verbal turn-taking skills have been learned, you can use them to encourage conversation. For example, your child may walk past you, say "Hi" and keep on walking. At that time, you can develop the greeting into a conversation by responding with "Hi! Look what I'm doing." Then, signal the child to come. In this way, you can start a conversation.

Encourage your child to take part in a conversation by making comments. This exposes the child to more language than using just questions. In Example A below, the parent asks questions only. The child responds in a limited way. In Example B, the parent uses both questions and comments to help the child practice language skills. This approach also makes the conversation more fun! The conversations take place while looking at a picture book.

Example A: Questioning the child

Parent: What's this?
(pointing to a picture)

Child: Frog.

Parent: This?

Child: Dog.

Example B: Encouraging conversation

Parent: I see a frog.
(pointing to a picture)

Child: See frog.

Parent: Yes, and look
at this?

Child: Doggie.

Parent: And what's this?

Child: (closes book)

Parent: Don't you want to read any more?

Child: (no answer)

Parent: What do you want to do now?

Child: Nothing.

Parent: A little doggie.

Child: Little boy.

Parent: Yes, I see a little boy.

Child: Turn.

Parent: OK, let's turn the page. You know this . . . (waiting)

Child: Fish.

Parent: That's right. He's fishing.

Example A is a dead-end interaction. The child ends the conversation because being quizzed is not much fun. In Example B, the parent encourages turn-taking by making comments and letting the child frequently take the lead. In Example A, the child is not learning how to participate in a conversation.

Conversational turn-taking

Even though children age three to four years now understand listener-speaker roles, they still have more to learn about turn-taking. The communication game rules have changed. When your child was first learning to talk, you wanted to **give** the child a turn. For conversation to become more adult-like, your child must now learn to **take** a turn.

Taking their turn in conversation is frequently difficult for young children. Children who wish to talk do not always have the ability to follow the topic. Their attempts to be heard may seem completely "off the subject." Children just learning conversational skills also have difficulty interrupting, changing topics, and ending conversations. They cannot listen to what others are saying and remember what they want to say at the same time.

Tips for parents

Use these tips to help your child develop turn-taking skills:

1. Whenever your child starts a conversation, respond positively.
2. Your child may try to join a conversation with a comment that has nothing to do with what you are talking about. Acknowledge the comment, but suggest that you talk about that subject later. Gently remind your child about the subject you are talking about.
3. Remember to include as many comments as questions in your conversations. A string of questions with yes/no answers will quickly dead-end a conversation. Instead, say, "Tell me about it" or "How did you do it?"
4. Get your child's attention before you talk.
5. Talk in short, simple sentences that you know your child can understand.
6. If you make a comment or ask your child a question, give the child enough time to answer.
7. Don't put pressure on your child to answer you.
8. Show your child how to end a conversation or change a subject.

Vocabulary

Nonverbal communication—Communication without words, using gestures, facial expressions, body language, or tone of voice.

Refer to:

- 3.3 Help Your Child Develop Imitation Skills
- 4.10 Improve Your Child's Listening Skills



Help Your Child Learn To Ask and Answer Questions

by M. Ann Marquis, M.S., C.C.C.

Introduction

We use language for many reasons, including greeting people, directing others, getting attention, getting information, and giving information to others.

An important part of a child's conversation with parents is to get information about how the world works. Children who have difficulty getting the information they need often feel frustrated. Because they are frequently misunderstood, they need lots of encouragement to keep trying to communicate.

Children get information by asking questions.

Questions are the most common way to request information. Questions enable us to learn about new things and ideas, satisfy our curiosity, and test how the world works. Children developing normally ask questions all the time. They have an endless curiosity. They are very bold about asking for new information.

Language disordered children generally do not ask many questions during everyday life. Or, if they do, the type of questions they ask is often limited. Sometimes these children even seem to lack an interest about getting new information about the world.

Failure to ask good questions to get good answers can cause some children to stop trying. If your child is having problems asking questions, reward every effort with praise and a thoughtful answer.

Why do some children have difficulty asking questions?

- They do not know how to put words together to form questions.
- They do not have the thinking skills to successfully request information.
- They do not know how to ask questions to get the most information from their listener.

All three areas influence each other. A child must have abilities in all areas in order to be successful at asking questions to get information.

Developing the ability to ask questions

As children learn to talk they usually acquire questioning skills in the following order:

Question

Type	Age	Example
Yes/no	2 yrs	May I go?
What	2 yrs	What is this?
Where	2½ yrs	Where is my shoe?
Who	2½-3 yrs	Who is that?
Why	4-5 yrs	Why is he crying?
How	4-5 yrs	How did you make that?
When	5-6 yrs	When is she coming?

"What" and "where" questions, which develop early, are closely tied to names and locations of people and things in a child's environment. "When" questions require that a child have some concept of time before such a question can be formed. Later-developing questions such as "why" and "how" are based on a child's knowledge of what causes certain events to happen. Developing the ability to ask questions is an ongoing process, not completed until adolescence.

You can help your child learn to ask questions.

1. Give your child interesting things to do and toys to play with. They will stimulate the child to learn more about the world.
2. Do everyday activities with your child. Talk about what you're doing as you do it. Ask and answer questions your child might be thinking. "What will we do next? Add the chocolate chips!" Even if you're not a "mind-reader," you'll show your child how people think and how people ask questions.
3. Give your full attention when your child is trying to ask you a question. Get down to your child's eye level.
4. After your child gets your attention, allow enough time for the question to be asked. Be patient if your child has difficulty putting thoughts into words.

5. Answer your child's questions. When you give information in response to a question, your child has been successful. Answers actually encourage more questions and stimulate your child's curiosity.
6. Praise your child for asking questions. If you didn't understand the question, ask your child to repeat or show you. If you do understand, let your child know. Repeat your child's question in a simple, correct way. Then answer it.
7. Ask questions often to get information. This provides a model or example for your child to imitate.

Help your child learn to give information.

Your child's ability to answer questions develops gradually. Children's ability to answer questions develops in approximately the same order as their ability to ask them. Take note of what types of questions your child can successfully answer (what, where, who, when, why, and how). In order to reduce frustration and help your child to be a good communicator, try to ask questions that you know your child can answer.

Including your child in everyday activities is a good way to encourage conversation. It also helps to develop language because the things you are talking about are there for the child to see. By including your child in conversations as much as possible, you are providing a model of how rich language can be.

Adults often ask children a series of questions and consider that to be a conversation. If your questions dominate the conversation, you are probably putting too much pressure on your child to produce answers. A more comfortable conversation is one in which you make as many comments as you ask questions, inviting your child to participate.

Tips for helping your child give information:

1. Before you ask a question, make sure you have your child's full attention.
2. After you ask a question, allow a few seconds for your child to think before answering.
3. Note which type of questions your child answers successfully or unsuccessfully. Ask the type of questions you think your child can answer.
4. Include your child in as many conversations as possible.
5. During conversation, use as many comments as questions.
6. Realize that questions like "You know what?" are a child's way of getting your attention so that information can be shared with you.

Vocabulary

Language disorder—Any difficulty in understanding and using language.

Model—To provide an example of good speech or other behavior; to demonstrate a desired verbal response.

Refer to:

- 4.7 Turn-Taking and Conversation
- 4.9 "Where" and "How" Questions
- 6.1.1 Asking Questions

Improve Your Child's Listening Skills

by Beth Witt, M.A.

How can parents help their child improve listening skills?

During the first six years of life, children must learn to listen effectively. Parents can show their child how to receive, understand, and use the information they hear. You can do the following activities at home to improve your child's listening skills:

1. Let your child choose a topic of conversation. If your child shows interest in a particular topic, show that you are interested too. Listen attentively, with a body posture that suggests interest. Answer questions and add new information about the topic.
2. Take a moment when your child rushes in excitedly, anxious to talk. If you can, drop everything and give your complete attention to the child. This will result in more willingness to communicate. You are also setting a good example for your child. You are showing your child how to listen actively when someone has something important to say.
3. Set aside a daily sharing time with your child. Sit down together in a quiet room with televisions and radios turned off. This tells your child you are sincerely interested. The child will want to listen and share. Gradually this will become a habit that can benefit your child throughout life.
4. Learn to communicate directions and questions at the level your child can understand. Many parents say too much, too quickly, or in too soft a voice. Children soon quit listening when the message is too hard to understand.
5. Make sure your body language and verbal language are saying the same thing. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Your child is much more apt to listen to and understand your message.
6. Help your child LOOK and LISTEN at the same time. Get into the habit of pointing and gesturing when giving directions. Pantomime actions when describing or relating a story. This improves your child's looking/listening skills and maintains interest as well.

What is listening comprehension?

Once you are sure that your child is a good listener, you can then help the child work on comprehension or understanding. Listening comprehension involves two abilities:

- To hear a question and mentally organize information to give an appropriate response.
- To hear and understand directions well enough to move the body to make the correct response.

How does listening comprehension develop?

In order to check your child's progress in developing listening comprehension, use the following chart of average child development. Remember, every child is a unique individual. Some children develop slower or faster than the average.

Age	Following Directions	Ability to Answer Questions
1-2 years	Can respond to simple one-step directions using words already understood: "Come here" "Get your shoes." "Bring me your book."	Can respond to simple pre-questions: "Show me the _____" or "Point to the _____." Can respond to simple "what" and "who" questions about objects presently in vocabulary ("What is this?") and about significant others ("Who is this?")
2-3 years	Can respond to a variety of one-step directions, including those using <i>concept</i> words: "Bring me the big ball."	Can respond to "Where is _____?" by pointing to the correct object. Can answer <i>yes/no</i> questions about visual objects that can be seen ("Is this a chair?") and about desires ("Do you want cookies?")
	Can respond to simple two-step directions: "Get your coat and put it on."	Can answer questions about familiar actions like eating, drinking, and sleeping.

Age	Following Directions	Ability to Answer Questions
3-5 years	<p>Can respond to a variety of two-step directions and some three-step directions: "Stand up, turn around, and clap your hands."</p> <p>Can respond to complex directions that include position and quantity words (in front of/behind, fast/slow)</p> <p>Can respond to "if/then" directions: "If you are wearing a belt, get in line."</p>	<p>Can answer questions that require some <i>association</i> or reasoning about objects or pictures that can be seen: "Which one can cut?" "What do you do with the towel?" "Where is the ball?"</p> <p>Can answer reasoning questions (how and why) after listening to a story or discussion.</p> <p>Can answer questions which require problem-solving skills: "What do you do if you get lost?"</p> <p>Can answer questions that include time-concept words (yesterday, tomorrow, now, later, first, last, etc.)</p>

Some children have a good vocabulary and can talk in sentences. Yet they may have trouble following directions, answering questions appropriately, expressing sentences with good word order, or organizing the telling of a "story." Learning disabilities can affect a child's ability to receive and organize information or remember events in sequence. These disabilities can cause problems with listening comprehension. A speech and language clinician or special teacher can help a child with learning disabilities. At home, parents can do a lot to help their child improve language and listening comprehension skills.

Use these communication tips to help your child at home:

1. Model correct language. Talk in sentences with good word order. Help your child organize events by saying "Now, first you _____. Then, you _____. What do you do next?"
2. Give directions slowly. Repeat if necessary. Your child may have trouble responding to several directions. Give the directions over, one step at a time. Point and gesture to get your point across. Your child will get in the habit of using both eyes and ears for listening comprehension.

3. If your child can't answer a question, rephrase it more simply and give a clue about the answer:

Parent: "Why do we have combs?"

Child: "I don't know."

Parent: "What do we do with combs?"(putting hand on hair)

Child: "My hair."

Parent: "Do combs make our hair look nice?"

Child: "Yes."

Parent: "Why do we have combs?"

Child: "To fix our hair nice."

Summary

Listening is half of communication. When you help your child learn to listen effectively, you are providing the foundation for successful communication.

Vocabulary

Association—The ability to recognize connections between two or more ideas, symbols, or things.

Concept—A general idea or characteristic applicable to several objects or events, which helps organize knowledge about the world.

Model—To provide an example of good speech or other behavior; to demonstrate a desired verbal response.

Speech and language clinician—A person who is qualified to diagnose and treat speech, language, and voice disorders.

Refer to:

- 2.1 Language Development
- 4.8 Help Your Child Learn to Ask and Answer Questions
 - 6.1.1 Asking Questions
 - 6.1.2 Giving Directions to Your Child
 - 6.1.4 Simplify Your Language to Help Your Child Understand

Improve Your Child's Memory Skills

by Beth Witt, M.A.

Introduction

Memory improves as children mature. Most children can remember more words, longer sentences, and more information as they get older. But some children have difficulty remembering what they hear or what they see. This can drastically limit both their ability to communicate and their ability to learn.

Suggested activities to improve memory skills

Whether your child has weak or strong memory skills, there are several important ways you can help the child remember and learn more:

1. Provide your child with a reasonable amount of structure and repetition in daily routines.

Your child probably gets up, eats breakfast, goes to school, comes home, eats dinner, and goes to bed at about the same time and place every day. Such a routine provides a certain dependability to your child's life that is relaxing and safe. Regular routines take away anxiety about what will happen next.

2. Listen carefully to your child.

Pay attention to the number of words the child can hear and remember. Most children between one and six can remember, repeat, or respond to the same number of words as their age. However, they can remember words that are related, such as "shoes and socks," more easily than they can remember words that are unrelated. A four-year-old child might be able to remember and repeat only four or five unrelated words, but be able to repeat a sentence of seven or eight related words. The child can probably respond to a two-step direction of seven words if the two steps are related in some way. For example, "Please bring me your shoes and socks" would be easier for most children to remember than "Stomp your feet and turn your head."

3. Give short, simple instructions that your child can understand.

Your child will gain confidence about listening and responding, and will learn more easily.

4. Gradually increase the length and complexity of your directions.

This will help increase your child's memory for what is heard.

5. Point and gesture to give some visual assistance to your spoken words.

This will help your child remember what you said.

6. When your child is successful, give lots of praise!

Sometimes, you will need to praise your child just for trying.

7. Use rhythm and beat to help your child remember.

If there is something you want your child to memorize, singing the material to a familiar tune such as "Happy Birthday" can help a great deal. For example, it is very important for children to learn their full name, age, address, and telephone number. You can put the words to the "Happy Birthday" tune. Then help your child sing the information. For example:

"My name is Bill Jones.
I am four years old.
I live at 12 Main Street.
And my Mom's name is Ann."

Remembering directions

In addition to improving overall memory skills, you can help your child learn to remember and follow directions. This can be difficult for some children. Try these suggestions with your child:

1. Give instructions at the time you want them carried out.

Your child can respond immediately and not have time to forget your instructions!

2. Repeat your directions if necessary.

Your child may move to respond and then stop, looking unsure of what to do next. Repeat your directions, using clear and simple language. Don't speak too fast. Either point to or touch the directed goal to help your child remember.

3. Give directions that include "position words" one step at a time.

"Put the big milk carton on the top shelf of the refrigerator" may be too difficult to understand. Instead, you can say, "Get the big milk carton." Point or gesture to indicate "big." Then say, "Now put it on the top shelf." Point to the correct place.

4. Sometimes it may help to have your child say your directions back to you.

This is one sure way to know if your child understands and remembers your directions.

Parent to four-year-old child: "I want you to put these pajamas in your bottom drawer. Put these socks in the top drawer."

Child: (looking blank) "O.K."

Parent: "Where do you put the pajamas?"

Child: "In the bottom drawer?"

Parent: "Good listening! And what goes in the top drawer?"

Child: "My socks!"

Parent: "Good for you!"

Summary

You can use many everyday situations to improve your child's memory skills. Structure lots of repetition. Give lots of praise for trying. These are the ways to help your child remember.

Refer to:

4.1 Learning New Words

4.10 Improve Your Child's Listening Skills

6.1.2 Giving Directions to Your Child

Tips for Parents on Learning at Home

by Margaret Schrader, M.S., C.C.C.

Introduction

Being a parent is a very special role. Parents are responsible for teaching their children about life and how to live it fully. This can be a very big job, especially if your child has communication difficulties. Parents often need information about how to best meet the needs of their child.

Your child's speech and language clinician can give you helpful information about your child's speech and language development. The clinician can also suggest specific activities to help your child learn at home. In addition, there are a few basic guidelines on teaching and learning which can help you and your child succeed:

Tips for Parents

1. Let your child feel loved.

Touching, hugs, kisses, gentle words, or an approving smile will help your child feel relaxed and confident about learning. Use a happy tone of voice to convey love and acceptance. When your child feels loved, the child is more likely to be open to learning.

2. Remember that your child is just a child.

It's important to keep your expectations appropriate to your child's abilities. Ask your speech clinician about your child's language abilities. That way, you won't expect too much—or too little—from your child.

3. Give your child approval.

Appreciate any success in learning your child accomplishes. Compliments will encourage your child to continue to learn. Criticism may discourage your child. Accept that your child can make mistakes. Each child is unique. Let your child know that you accept your child's strengths and weaknesses.

4. Help your child to feel important.

Take time to do things with your child. Driving in the car, going to the store, and doing family activities are all opportunities for learning. Your child will appreciate your time and attention.

5. Remember that learning can be fun.

Have a good time with your child. Play together. Do things that delight both of you. If you do not

enjoy what you are doing, neither will your child. Follow your child's lead in finding things that are fun to do.

6. Talk to your child.

Even if your child does not seem to understand at first, talk often about what you are doing together. Give your child time to respond.

7. Really listen to your child.

Get down to your child's eye level, and look at your child as you are listening. Respond to what your child says. This shows your child that you are sincerely interested in the child's thoughts and feelings. Make sure your child has enough opportunities to be listened to.

8. Share your ideas and experiences with your child's speech clinician, doctor, or teacher.

Share information and ask questions about your child's learning needs. Let them know about situations which may affect your child's learning, such as illnesses or problems at home.

9. Take an interest in your child's schoolwork or therapy.

Help your child learn to be enthusiastic about learning. Talk about school and therapy in a positive way.

Summary

You are your child's first, and most important, teacher. You set an example for your child of how to listen and talk with others. You can make a big difference in how well your child develops communication skills. It is important to help your child learn and practice communication skills at home. As your child uses these new skills in everyday activities, you can feel proud of your child's success.

Refer to:

4.0 Articles on Learning to Talk and Understand
5.0 Articles on Home Activities for Speech and Language Development

“Where” and “How” Questions

by Beth Witt, M.A.

Introduction

As they grow, children learn different kinds of words in a predictable order:

1. First, children learn to use nouns to name objects and people that are important to them, like “Mama,” “cookie,” or “cup.” They may use nouns in many different ways: to express needs, to question, and to simply enjoy the excitement and power of using words.
2. Next, children learn to use action words—verbs—like “play,” “eat,” “gimme” (give me), or “go night-night” (go to sleep).
3. Children then begin to combine words together (“All gone milk” or “Mama night-night”).
4. Words that describe or give more information about people, objects, and actions are next. These describing words include:

Color (red)
 Size (big)
 Shape (round)
 Feel (soft)
 Smell (tangy)
 Taste (salty)
 The degree of an object or action (bigger, softest, etc.)
 Where (in/out)
 How (fast, loud, good, etc.)

Learning “where” and “how” words can be very difficult for some children. These words are more abstract than words naming objects, people, or actions. That is, they do not represent things you can simply look at and name. You can help your child understand and use “where” and “how” words by sharing some simple experiences and talking about what is happening.

“Where” words

“Where” words describe location. Some “where” words that most children understand by the age of five or six are:

in/out	top/bottom
on/under/over	near/far
in front of/behind	between
through/around	

Use These Activities to Help Your Child Understand “Where” Words:

1. Have your child move in relation to an object. Tables or chairs are easy to use.

Parent (placing a chair in the middle of a room): “Let’s play the ‘where’ game. You go here.” (pointing to under the chair)

Child: “Here I am!”

Parent: “Where are you?”

Child: “Here _____ chair!”

Parent: “You are under the chair!”

Child: “I under the chair!”

2. Have your child move small toys and name their positions.

Parent: “Put the big block in the truck.”
(Child obeys.) “Where is the block?”

Child: “In the truck!”

Parent: “Right! The block is in the truck!”

3. Play “I See” with your child. Give your child the opportunity to direct and question, using position words.

Parent: “I see something big and blue.”

Child: “Where is it?”

Parent: “On the bed.”

Child: “Blanket!”

Child: “I see something green.”

Parent: “Is it high or low?”

Child: “Low.”

Parent: “Is it on or under the table?”

Child: “Under the table.”

Parent: “The green rug?”

Child: “That’s it!”

4. Point to people or objects in storybook pictures and ask your child where they are. Help the child answer correctly. First, children can understand and express where their own bodies are in reference to other objects. Then they can learn to use place or position words in relationship to pictures.

5. Give your child regular practice using place words.

Parent: "You are going outside to play?"

Child: "Yes, I outside backyard."

Parent: "Stay in the backyard. Don't go out of the gate!"

Child: "I stay in backyard."

6. Use place words in sentences to tell your child what you are doing:

"I put the napkin under the fork."

"We pour milk in the glasses."

"The dog is under the bed."

"I put shampoo on your hair."

Helping your child use place words to answer "where" questions will help develop language and thinking skills. This will help prepare your child for more abstract abilities, such as answering "how" questions about themselves, their abilities, and their play.

"How" questions

Several kinds of information are needed to answer "how" questions:

"How old are you?" "Three years old." Quantity

"How was the ice cream?" "Good!" Value judgment

"How do you build a bridge?" "First you put two blocks like this. Then put another one on top." Method, sequence

You can use everyday activities to familiarize your child with "how" questions:

1. Find frequent opportunities to ask your child "how" questions:

"How do you get a bowl of cereal?"

"How did you get here so fast?"

"How many games did you play?"

"How does the chicken taste?"

2. If your child has trouble answering your questions, help the child answer. You can give the child the answer in an is/are or do/don't type question:

"Do you pour the cereal or the milk first?"

"Is the chicken crunchy?"

Summary

Children learn "where" and "how" words most easily when the object or experience being described is present; learning at home is a meaningful way to develop and practice these difficult words. Talk about objects and actions in the environment first. Then, help your child use these new "where" and "how" words to describe pictures in books or in the family photo album.

Repeat the newly learned words in many situations for your child. Praise your child when the child uses the word correctly. Using these tips, you can help your child develop important language skills.

Vocabulary

Abstract--Relating to ideas, symbols, and relationships rather than concrete objects.

Refer to:

4.8 Help Your Child Learn to Ask and Answer Questions

6.1.1 Asking Questions