



Happy Talk's Top 10 Tips for Early Speech, Language and Communication Development

1. Be Face to Face



Getting down to the level of your child and being face to face whilst you're playing or talking helps to encourage interaction and eye contact as well as develop listening skills. It also helps the child to join in with you. When you are face to face, you can both see mouth movements, facial expressions, and body language more easily which helps develop speech, language and communication skills.

2. Follow your Child's Lead

Young children are more likely to enjoy playing with something they have chosen for themselves. By following your child's lead, it gives you chance to watch how they are playing with a toy and join in by copying what they do. Giving your child the choice of what they play with will help to develop their confidence, attention, and play skills. It will also encourage two-way interaction with you.



3. Listen and Wait



By listening and waiting you allow your child to listen to what you have said and then give them time to make a response. This could take up to 10 seconds. By doing this you encourage interaction which may be a noise, a word, a look or the way they move.

You could also try offering a little bit and then waiting for them to respond e.g. instead of giving a full cup of water, give a little bit and then wait for your child to ask for more. This could be through a look, gesture, or word. Give them a little bit more and then wait for them to respond again.





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4. Copying



By copying your child's vocalisations, words, and actions you are encouraging two-way interaction and turn-taking. You are also reinforcing the communication your child is making and encouraging them to copy you too. By copying what that say, you also provide a clear adult model of the word for them to hear e.g. "ta"- "yes it's a car."

5. Offering Choices

Offering choices develops a child's understanding and use of words. By showing them two items in your hands and naming the items e.g. "juice or water" you are encouraging the child to look and interact to show you the item that they want. You are also giving them clear models of the words. Offering them items that they want encourages the development of attention and listening skills and eye contact.



6. Comment instead of Question

Question	Comment
What's that?	➡ Ball! Throw the ball!
What are you eating?	➡ Mmm apple! You like apples
Can you say car?	➡ Car! Vroom vroom!

A child learns language through adult modelling and commenting on what they can see or what is happening around them. This helps to develop their understanding and listen to clear adult models of the words they hear. It also helps to focus their attention on what they are doing or looking at and encourages interaction and conversation. Questions like "what's that?" stop the flow of conversation as they act to test the child rather than developing their language further.

7. Keep Language Simple

Keeping language simple by using single words and short sentences makes it easier for young children to learn and understand new words. You can model vocabulary by talking about what they are looking at e.g. "train" or "big train." This helps to develop their understanding of words and connect the word to the object or situation. You can also use gesture to support their understanding of the word.

Changing the sound of your voice e.g. using a higher pitch; can help keep your child's attention.

It is important to repeat words many times as a child needs to hear a word 200 times in context before they are able to understand and use it themselves!







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8. Expand

	ball beach ball Catch the beach ball.
	book big book Read a big book.

Expanding on what your child has said by copying their word and adding another, encourages their understanding of words and phrases. It also develops the child's listening skills and ability to use longer phrases which develops their expressive language.

9. Praise

Everybody loves praise, especially young children. Praising them on their achievements, no matter how small, motivates them to keep trying.

You can offer praise by smiling and using a positive action e.g. clapping, high fives or thumbs up, giving a cuddle or by saying an encouraging comment.



10. Give your Child a Reason to Communicate



Give your child a reason to communicate and then wait to see what they do.

You could:

- 'forget' to put a drink in their cup and just give them the empty cup
- put their shoes on their hands or their gloves on their feet when helping them get ready to go out
- brush their hair with their toothbrush – you can be as silly or as sensible as you like!

Get in Touch!



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