



Happy Talk's Top 10 Tips for Developing Use of Language

1. Modelling

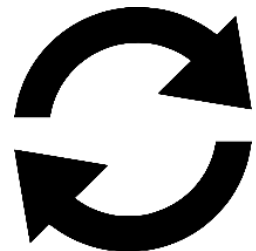


A child learns language through listening to those around them. It is important to model accurate words and sentences throughout the day. When your child says a word or sentence with an error e.g. - "it hims car," give them a positive model saying, "yes, it's his car." This is so that they can hear the accurate production of the words without correcting them. A child needs lots of clear adult models to be able to learn vocabulary and to use words correctly in sentences.

2. Repeat, repeat, repeat!

Repeating vocabulary and what you have said to your child will help them to firstly understand and then develop their use of language. It is important to make sure your child is attending to what you are saying whilst you are repeating.

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!



3. Offer 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 vocabulary based on motivating items that they need to request. Once they have chosen, you can then repeat the vocabulary again e.g., "you want juice, juice, good choice!"







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4. 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 expands their expressive language.

5. Comment instead of Question

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 give them opportunity to 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.

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

6. Develop Vocabulary



Provide lots of opportunity to develop your child's vocabulary by giving them an adult model for what they are looking at and focussed on. Comment on what the child can see using single words, short phrases and repeating this vocabulary over and over e.g., "a tree. It's a big tree. Look at the branches on the tree. I can see lots of leaves on the tree."

7. Think about the Questions you do ask

We all ask questions, and when a child is asked a question, they are expected to respond. Their ability to answer will depend on how difficult the question is and how good their language skills are. You can help your child to answer questions by:

- Avoiding questions which are too complicated for your child. If they are struggling to answer, rephrase your question. 'Who' 'what' and 'where' questions are easier to answer than 'why' 'when' and 'how' questions.
- Giving your child plenty of time to think of and give their reply.
- Avoiding asking another question before your child has had time to answer the first one.





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8. Listen and Wait



By listening and waiting after you have said something to your child, you give them time to listen, process and then make their response. This could take up to 10 seconds. If your child does not respond, try repeating what you have said again.

9. Use Alternative Communication Methods

Try not to bring attention to the fact you might not have understood what your child has said. Instead say "show me" or use closed questions that require a yes or no answer to find out what they have said. You can also encourage your child to mime or gesture when they are talking to help you understand. You can do this by modelling gesture when you talk. If you are still struggling to understand them, you can say "oh dear, my ears are not working very well today I'm sorry. Silly ears!" This will help to maintain your child's confidence in communicating rather than them thinking they have been unsuccessful.



10. Home-School Diary



When a child has expressive language difficulties, it can be hard to understand what they are saying, especially out of context. Having a home-school diary is useful so that you can see information about what your child has been doing at school/nursery and vice versa. This helps you to pre-empt what your child may be wanting to tell you about their day. You can also let school/nursery know what your child has been doing at home so that they can talk to your child about this and know what your child may be wanting to tell them about. Including pictures can be really useful as this prompts discussion about what is happening in the picture e.g., "you have baked a cake at home with mummy! It looks delicious!"

Get in Touch!



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