



# Growing Language Together

Practical Tips for Parents and Educators




Language relates to the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing and the ability to understand oral language and written text. A child with language problems may therefore have trouble with one or more of these skills. Speech therapists help them to overcome their challenges related to language and communication.


The wide variety of causes, co-morbidities, and different developmental paces require a tailored and holistic approach for language disorders or delays. Collaboration between speech therapists and other professionals, as well as the child's parents/caregivers and teachers are essential to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the individual's needs.

The importance of involving a child's broader environment in speech therapy is twofold. Speech therapists need insight into the child's home and school life, while parents, caregivers, and teachers should be guided to integrate language development into daily routines. How can supporting language skills become a simple everyday habit?

## How to consistently encourage a child's language development in daily life?

 **A commonly used exercise is narrating everyday situations.** As a parent, you are constantly engaged in various tasks: laundry, grocery shopping, cooking. As a parent of a young child, you often do these things in their presence. So, don't do them in silence—think out loud instead and verbalise what you are doing.

It may seem simple or obvious, but in fact, you are already using a lot of language during the day that you can share with your child. Children need to hear words several times before using them. For children with a language delay, that repetition is even more important.

 **Speaking of repetition, another useful strategy is recasting.** This involves repeating what the child has said, but with corrections or expansions to model the correct form. The goal is to provide the child with a more complex and accurate version of their original utterance without directly pointing out errors, making it a natural and supportive way to enhance language learning.

For example, if a child says, "Doggy run," the response from a caregiver might be, "Yes, the doggy is running." This includes the correct grammatical structure and adds more detail to the sentence while still being positive and engaging, as the focus is on communication rather than correction.

✓ **Spending a few minutes a day of uninterrupted face-to-face interaction with your child can make a huge difference for not only learning but also correctly applying words.** Think about looking at books or magazines together. Make it a habit to read a bedtime story every evening to encourage (the expansion of and proper use of) vocabulary.

✓ **Pointing to pictures and describing what you see can be very effective to enhance language development.** It's not necessary to focus too much on reading straight through text. Flip through the pages, explore the book and just talk together about what you see.

✓ As a final suggestion, **games such as blowing and popping bubbles, I spy, or singing** together can encourage interaction and communication, and help children expand their speech and language skills.

In the end it's the nature of each individual disorder or delay which determines the most appropriate intervention and activities for improved future outcomes. But, in most cases, the tips mentioned can be a useful starting point to consistently promote language development in day-to-day life.

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