

# Language Stimulation Techniques

Teaching a child to understand and use language should be a rewarding experience for parents.

It can be frustrating when your children are not learning to communicate as quickly as others do.



You as a parent are the best teacher of language. You are the person who knows your child best and spends the most time with them. By changing how you use language, you can stimulate your child to learn how to understand and use language.

You may be using some of these strategies already, but there may be others that you may learn or you may learn how to extend on some of the things you are already doing.

Using these strategies are the first step in helping your child learn how to communicate!

REMEMBER: At first, we aren't interested in the sounds your child makes, but in the words they are learning and how they use these words to get their message across.

## Make It Motivating

Make communication motivating for your child by using activities that are highly motivating or of high interest to them. This might be peek-a-boo, balloons, bubbles, music, balls, or water play. You can use anything your child is interested to help them learn language!

## Let Them Know You're Interested

There are things you can do to let your child know that you are interested in what they are doing. Letting them know this will make them more motivated to communicate.

While your child is playing with something that they like doing, join in on their game. Play at your child's level where you can see your child's eyes and they can see yours e.g. lie on the floor. Use signals to let your child know you're listening to what they might say & that you are interested in what they are doing.

For example:

- Open your eyes wide with anticipation.
- Raise your eyebrows to signal that you expect something.
- Smile to encourage your child and let them know you believe they can come through with the answer.
- Lean towards your child to show them they have your interest.



## Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Using repetitive phrases will help your child to learn what they mean and encourage them to say them as they anticipate what you will say. Repeat the same words or phrases during the same routines – for example, when your child is getting dressed you could say ‘shirt *on*’, ‘pants *on*’, shoes *on*’.

## Wait & Listen

Sometimes it takes children longer to communicate than it does for adults. Therefore they need more time to learn how to communicate in their own way.

It can be hard waiting for your child to communicate and it is sometimes much easier for us to help them by talking and answering for them. It is natural for parents to want to take over and help your child communicate, especially if it is hard for them to do.

However, if you want to help your child learn to use language, you need to give them a chance to do it on their own, in their own time and in their own way.

We also need to listen to what the child is saying with all our attention. By doing this, you can learn about what your child actually wants and needs and are also giving the child the encouragement and motivation to make communicating worthwhile!



## Give choices

Choice making is important because it enables a child to have control over his or her environment. It also teaches the child that communication is for a reason, i.e. we communicate to express our needs and wants as well as our feelings.

If your child wants a drink, give them a choice of 2 drinks.

e.g. ask ‘want milk or juice?’ showing them the 2 choices and wait for your child to respond. If your child points to which one they want, you can say ‘juice, want juice’ and again wait for your child to respond.



## Recognise Your Child’s Attempts

Recognise any attempts your child makes to communicate as meaningful! Observe your child’s body language, facial expressions and sounds – your child may be trying to communicate to you non-verbally.

Don’t be afraid to be enthusiastic. Praise any attempts that your child makes to communicate, making your praise specific to what they are doing.

## Talk Simply

Talk at your child's language level instead of your own language level - if your child is using 1-2 word sentences then use 1-2 word sentences when talking to your child.

Use only the 'key' or information words. For example, say 'want swing?' instead of 'Does Chris want to have a turn on the swing?' or "hat on" instead of "go and put your hat on".

Shortening sentences when talking to your child will:

- Help your child understand what you are saying to them more easily.
- Give your child a chance to repeat what you are saying.
- Help your child get more motivated to communicate.

This can be hard to do if you are used to talking at your level, but persist with this because it will help your child better understand and use language.

## Use Visual Cues & Prompts

Show your child what you want them to do.

Some examples:

- If you want your child to sit down then you could point to the chair while saying 'sit down'
- If you want your child to wash his/her hands then you could rub your hands together while saying 'wash hands'
- If you want your child to come and eat, show them a food wrapper.

## Imitate

Imitate what your child says. Doing this will:

- Let your child know that you are interested in what they are saying
- Motivate your child to say it again!
- Reinforce to your child what your child has said

Imitating also teaches your child turn taking in conversations e.g. they say something, then you say something, and then it is their turn to talk again etc. If your child is saying sounds but not real words, when imitating you can model/add information to what they have said to help them learn more real words.

How to imitate:

- If your child is babbling you can imitate the sounds that they are saying then wait for your child to respond
- Copy your child's sounds & words e.g. if your child says 'uh' for 'up' you can say "uh, want up"
- Encourage your child to copy what you say e.g. 'up, billy say up' and praise any attempts your child makes to verbalise



## Add Information

You can help your child learn that their communicative attempts 'mean' something by adding more information to what they say. For example if your child said 'ba' and there was a ball nearby, you could say 'ba, ball, want ball'.

You can also help your child to expand their vocabulary and sentence length by adding more information to what they say. For example if your child said 'car' you could say 'car, brmm car/car go/red car/fast car' etc.

By adding one more piece of information you are helping your child understand more words and also giving them a chance to copy more words at their communicative level.

## Comment

Commenting on what you and your child do in your everyday activities will help your child understand what different words mean. It will also give your child a chance to repeat what you have said or use the words the next time they see you doing that action.

You can comment by using short and simple sentences to describe yours and your child's actions in many situations.

Some Ideas:

- Talk about what you are doing e.g. when your child is getting dressed you can say things like "arms up", "shirt off" etc.
- Talk about what your child is doing e.g. if your child is playing with cars you can say things like "brmmm", "up,up,up", "car go", "one, two cars" etc.

