



# How to support children with Language Disorder I

Nurturing children's language skills is like cultivating plants, there must be appropriate soil, environment and nutrients for the plants to grow healthily. So what do we need to pay attention and be prepared before we talk to them in order to promote their language skill?

## **Appropriate learning environment**

A quiet and neat environment helps to increase children's attention span. Remember to switch off the television and mobile phone in order to reduce distraction during interaction.

## **Use of different kinds of reinforcement**

For those children who are young and weak in comprehension, we can use material rewards as reinforcement, such as snacks or stickers during the activities so as to increase their interest and attention. As their attention and comprehension improve, they will gradually enjoy the fun of the games. Then, we can gradually use praise to replace material rewards.

## **Give children time to respond**

Some parents may dominate the interaction by asking a lot of questions and talking without a break, and yet forget to give children time to respond. We suggest parents adjust their speaking rate during the games. Pause after asking questions, observe children's facial expression to see if there is anything they do not understand, and give proper guidance accordingly. Sometimes we also need to repeat or rephrase the questions and sentences so as to let children participate in the games and conversations effectively.



## **Join and participate actively**

During the game, parents can use varied intonation as well as lively and funny actions to arouse children's attention. Apart from these, it is important for parents to enjoy the game and have pleasure in playing with their children so that children would like playing with them too. Children will definitely be impressed by the joy and happiness of parents and become more willing to learn and play with them.

### **Suggestions on activities to enhance children's language skills:**

#### **1. Children who have not been able to say single words yet**

- a. Make use of music or nursery rhymes, add some simple actions such as "clapping hands", "touching ears" and "stamping feet", etc. and ask the children to imitate the actions.
- b. Invite children to sing along with the nursery rhymes, emphasise some funny sounds such as the sounds of animals or vehicles. Encourage them to imitate the sounds.
- c. Make use of puppets and encourage children to imitate different sounds such as the ducks' quack or the dogs' bark, etc.
- d. Encourage children to use gesture for communication such as patting themselves to mean "I", sticking out hands to mean "give", shaking heads to reject. While children express what they want by gestures, parents can explain what the gestures refer to in words.



## 2. Children who have started to say single words

- a. Put the common objects or toys like cups, bowls, spoons and toy cars, etc. into a bag, and let children draw out the things and say their names.
- b. Learn the name of each body part while taking a bath or looking in the mirror with children. Parents can also put stickers on the body parts of their children so as to arouse their attention and interest to learn.
- c. Parents can make use of common real objects and ask children to match or sort them based on what their categories (e.g., food, transports). Parents can also print out the photos of the real objects and ask children to match or sort in order to strengthen their knowledge of the names of the objects.
- d. Make use of children's favourite snacks and encourage them to make request by saying words like "give" or "biscuits". Then, reward them with the snacks.

## 3. Children who have started to say two-word phrases

- a. Read colourful picture books together with children and introduce the activities of different people in the books so that they can have a better grasp of the verbs like "riding a bicycle", "eating ice-cream", "reading a book", "buying bread", etc.
- b. Ask children to follow two element commands in everyday life, such as "put the cup on the plate" and "take an apple and a banana".
- c. In everyday life, parents can introduce the names of different objects to children, such as the clothes they are wearing, the products sold in the supermarket, the vehicles running along the roads, etc.
- d. Blow bubbles together with children. Ask them to say phrases like "blow the bubbles" or "I blow", etc. If they can just reply with single words, parents can provide modelling as a cue.



#### 4. Children who have started to say simple sentences

- a. Use animal toys like dogs, pigs and cats, etc. when playing toy kitchens with children so as to encourage them to describe the scenarios with sentences, for example, “the dog is cutting an apple”, “the cat is eating ice-cream” and “the pig is cooking”, etc.
- b. Describe the colours and characteristics of the objects and food in everyday life so as to enhance children’s ability to describe things.
- c. Ask children different questions and wait for their answer, for example, “What are you doing?”, “Where is the cat?” and “Who is eating”, etc. in order to enhance their comprehension skills.
- d. Take away the items needed during the games and activities purposefully, e.g., take away the utensils during meals or coloured pencils while drawing, etc. Encourage them to ask questions or say some simple sentences like “Where is the spoon?” and “Mom, I want the coloured pencil” to express what they want.



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