



Research in  
Developmental Disabilities  
and Language Lab

# Language Strategies to Support your Child's Communication

## Model language

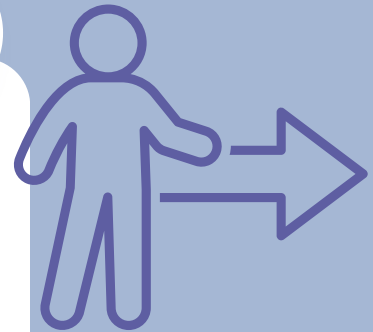


Provide models of language that describe your child's focus of attention. Talk about what your child is looking at, engaged with, or doing.

- Use a variety of nouns, verbs, and adjectives in full sentences. Examples: "Wow! The car is driving fast!";
- Don't forget to talk through routines! For example: "first, we turn on the water. Then, we get some soap. Now we rub, rub, rub our hands. Next, we rinse off the soap with water. Last, we dry our hands on the towel."

## Follow their lead in play

Join your child in activities and play that they enjoy. Notice what your child is doing and imitate their actions. You can also model new play actions. Pause after you take a turn to see what your child does next. When engaged in play, position yourself so that you are face-to-face with your child.



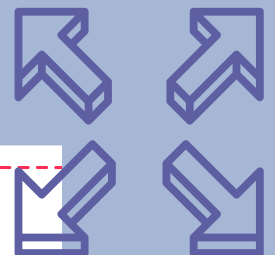
## Interpret nonverbal communication attempts

Your child may communicate without words through gestures (e.g., point, reach, give, head shake), facial expressions, eye gaze, posture, etc. Try to notice these communications and interpret their message. Then, provide a model of words or signs that match their intent. For example, if your child hands you an unopened snack, interpret by modeling "Help/open please" or "Help me open the snack."



## Expand verbal communication attempts

Your child may communicate using single verbal words and/or signs. Expand their verbal messages by adding a word or two to what they say. For example, if your child says "ball," you could add an adjective like "red ball" or an action like "Throw the ball!"



## Give your child a reason to communicate

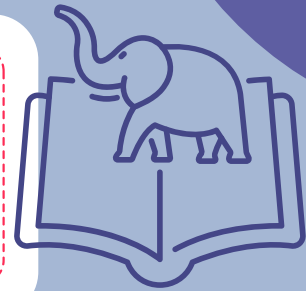


Set up the environment to provide indirect prompts or communication temptations so that your child has a reason to communicate with you. Examples:

- Fill-in-the-blank prompts: "The wheels on the bus go \_\_\_": "Here comes the \_\_\_" (while holding up an animal toy)
- Place objects in sight but out of reach. Your child may reach or point to gain access. This is communication!

## Engage in shared storytelling

Read books together. While reading, point to pictures and describe what is happening in the story. Pause and see what your child points to, talks about, or looks at in the book. Don't worry about reading all the words on a page if the book is long or making it through the entire book.



## Use exaggerated speech and sound effects

Get silly and use sound effects, exclamations, and exaggerate or emphasize parts of your sentences. This helps draw your child's attention to you as the speaker and engage in your interaction.



## Avoid asking questions

Asking too many questions can be unnatural and stressful for children. Instead, use the strategies provided here to encourage your child to communicate with you.



## Use predictive songs and books

Using songs and books that offer repetition helps your child learn what is expected, and they can start to take a turn completing the song or book. After singing or reading a book together a few times, start to pause at the end of the song or book routine to give your child a chance to fill-in-the-blank. If they don't, model the response and continue singing or reading together.



# Resources

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Communication Milestones: 2 to 3 Years (<https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/communication-milestones-2-to-3-years/>):

- What should my child be able to do?
  - Uses word combinations often but may occasionally repeat some words or phrases, like “baby – baby sit down” or “I want – I want juice.”
  - Tries to get your attention by saying, “Look at me!”
  - Says their name when asked.
  - Uses some plural words like birds or toys.
  - Uses -ing verbs like “eating” or “running.” Adds -ed to the end of words to talk about past actions, like “looked” or “played.”
  - Gives reasons for things and events, like saying that they need a coat when it’s cold outside.
  - Asks why and how.
  - Answers questions like “What do you do when you are sleepy?” or “Which one can you wear?”
  - Correctly produces p, b, m, h, w, d, and n in words.
  - Correctly produces most vowels in words.
  - Speech is becoming clearer but may not be understandable to unfamiliar listeners or to people who do not know your child.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association ProFind (<https://www.asha.org/profind/>):

- ASHA ProFind is a database of speech-language pathologists and audiologists who have indicated they are accepting referrals.

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (<https://imaginationlibrary.com/>):

- Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and Republic of Ireland.

The Hanen Center (<https://www.hanen.org/Home.aspx>):

- The Hanen Center is a non-profit dedicated to teaching parents and professionals how to transform their daily interactions with young children to build the best possible lifelong social, language, and literacy skills. Their website has helpful tips for parents and a Youtube channel with resources and examples.

Local Libraries (<https://libraryfinder.org/>):

- Local libraries have many free resources and events catered toward children.

UW Speech and Hearing Clinic (<https://csd.wisc.edu/clinic/>):

- The UW Speech and Hearing Clinic (UWSHC) is a teaching clinic that offers evaluation, treatment, and consultation services that are accessible, culturally responsive, and evidence-based, for children and adults with speech, language, hearing, and related communication needs.

Waisman Center (<https://www.waisman.wisc.edu/general-information/families/>):

- The Waisman Center is dedicated to advancing knowledge about human development, developmental disabilities, and neurodegenerative diseases.