

Using Role play and pretend play to enhance speech and language

Dressing up is great fun and playing different roles will expand your child's imagination. In fact you do not even have to dress up to do role play. Games involving different characters will allow you to introduce lots of new related language and stretch your child's imagination and creative play skills. Most types of interaction through play will have a positive effect on speech and language acquisition. The child's social skills will also benefit because they will be using eye contact, turn-taking and listening skills. By letting your child take the lead in a game, they will gain confidence in communicating and feel that they are in control, so be relaxed in the communication environment.

Role Play

Depending on your child's language competence you may want to set a goal for each game, although it is important not to make it too structured because we want the game to be led by the child. Any goal should be simple and flexible. Language needs to be fed into the game, rather than trying to encourage the child to say particular words. This means we don't want to be continually saying to the child "what is he doing?" or "what are you doing?" or "say running, say running". Children do not learn language this way, children learn language by hearing it first and making associations between the word and the action. As adults we want to just feed the language in at the appropriate times.

Example of a language role play game:

Bus Driver game: Let your child be a bus driver and you can be the passenger. Set up some chairs for a bus and act the roles. As an example, just look at all the verbs you might use in this game:

Steer the bus, **Press** the horn, **Ring** the bell, **Sit** down, **Pay** the driver, **Drive** the bus, **Find** the change, **Walk** down the aisle.

If your child finds a game complicated, you could be the bus driver first and model it for your child, then your child can take a turn and you add language to the situation.

Another example that I have used before is the fireman game. Pretend to be firemen putting out a fire, think how many related words you could use" fire, fireman, fire engine, ladder, water, hose, burning, building, driving, climbing, up, down, smoke, hat, boots, jackets, save, squirt, bucket, fire out, hero, etc etc. Role play is great for expanding your child's imagination and introducing new vocabulary.





Example of a role play to focus on speech and literacy:

Practising the /s/ sound: The goal of this game could be to work on the /s/ sound for speech or literacy difficulties. You could play a game involving a lifeguard and model lots of words beginning with /s/ e.g. sand, sea, swim, sailing boat, sandwiches, sun, sink etc. After the game you can talk about all the words that start with the letter /s/ and model them again.

Example of promoting speech and language in everyday situations:

The shopping trip: a roll play about a shopping trip to a supermarket could be another way to work on speech and/or literacy. You could look for items starting a with a certain letter. Cut pictures of food from magazine adverts, or use what is in your cupboard for the game, or alternatively take your game to the supermarket when you do the shopping.



Making a cake: a cooking session can be used to promote language in lots of ways. Why not pretend you are cooking in a restaurant kitchen and an order comes through for a cake. There are lots of language opportunities:

Teach vocabulary by naming all the ingredients.

Model lots of verbs - stir, pour, cut, fill, spread, weigh, whisk, taste.

Practice speech and literacy awareness e.g. "which ingredient begins with /b/".

Pretend you have problems with your memory and get your child to name the ingredient e.g:

Mum: now I have to pour in the..... oh, what's it called....the.....

Child: sugar

Mum: sugar, that's right

If your child does not know the word, just pretend to suddenly remember it and model it to them.

For more information and strategies around all forms of communication and communication impairment see our website - www.icommunicatetherapy.com.



To learn more about child development, communication, and developing your child's speech and language skills, you can read about and purchase books on our website www.icommunicatetherapy.com. Click this link to see our online Resource Centre

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Suggested Reading

The Wonder Years: Helping Your Baby and Young Child Successfully Negotiate The Major Developmental Milestones by American Academy Of Pediatrics (Author), Tanya Remer Altmann

Developing Child, The by Helen Bee and Denise Boyd

Milestones: Normal Speech And Language Development Across the Lifespan by Jr., Ph.D. Oller, et al John W.

Child Development by Laura E. Berk

Ages and Stages: A Parent's Guide to Normal Childhood Development by Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

Child Development, Second Edition: A Practitioner's Guide (Social Work Practice with Children and Families) by Douglas D Davies

Child Development by Robert S. Feldman

What's Going on in There? : How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life by Lise Eliot

Child Development: Principles and Perspectives by J. Littlefield Cook & G. Cook

Let's Talk Together - Home Activities for Early Speech & Language Development by Amy Chouinard and Cory Poland

Born to Talk: An Introduction to Speech and Language Development by Lloyd M. Hult and Merle R. Howard

Speaking, Listening and Understanding: Games for Young Children by Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring

Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know by Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi

The Parents Guide to Speech and Language Problems by Debbie Feit

The Handbook of Child Language Disorders by Richard G. Schwartz

Does My Child Have a Speech Problem? by Katherine L. Martin

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