

Language Lessons in the Home

by
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Many people don't realize that "speech therapy" doesn't just refer to "speech sounds," but it refers to an entire menu of language and learning selections. Language itself is a wide topic that ranges from vocabulary to reading comprehension. Statewide standardized testing (i.e., the California Achievement Test) assesses a child's language skills. Reading on a grade level requires a certain knowledge of age-appropriate vocabulary. The simple social act of conversation is a specific language we know as "pragmatic language."

Language develops early in life. In fact, the simple act of your baby smiling at you is one of the signs of your child's language development. The term "mother-ease" defines parent-child activities such as: eye contact, imitation of the child's "goo goo ga ga" sounds, and infant games like "Peek a Boo." Language continues to develop until we are adults. This is why parents and the home are so important for language development.

Interaction and conversation during everyday activities are the keys to excellent language skills. Talk to your child about everything, and they will talk back! Here are some tips for learning language in the home.

1. Talk to your child during mealtime, driving the car, bathing, dressing, cleaning, shopping, and watching TV. Ask the child to label or describe the objects in the environment.

2. Ask the child questions about what they did in school or during a play date. Sequencing language helps with vocabulary retention, reading readiness, and math skills.

3. Keep a calendar, journal, or scrap book with your child. Have the child be aware of upcoming holidays, birthdays, school activities, and religious events. This adds to the child's knowledge of his/her environment and allows for good conversation.

4. Your language is the model for your child's speech and language, so encourage encourage conversations that are both age appropriate and polite! Social graces such as "please" and "thank you" help your child gain their wants and needs in the classroom and in life.

5. Be proud of your accomplishments with your child! Research proves that parents know best when it comes to their own child's language development. If you notice speech or language difficulties, discuss them with your child's teacher or the school's Speech-Language Pathologist.



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Parents Help to Encourage Social Success at Home, Too!

By Audrey Prince, M.Ed.

Parents are fundamental contributors to their child's success. As many educators acknowledge, parents are a child's first teachers. A home environment that promotes academic and social success should not be undervalued. Many parents work to improve a child's academic success by making sure the child completes all homework, studies for tests, and develops creative projects. But parents also have opportunities to help improve a child's social success. Below are suggestions for teaching social skills that parents can practice with their children at home.

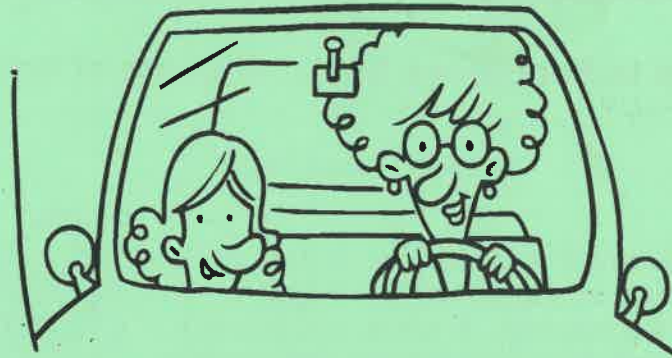


Steps for Teaching Social Skills at Home

1. Discuss the Need for Social Skills- Children need to understand that social skills are important. Share with your child that adults use social skills in their workplaces and community. Talk about/point out experiences that you or your child may have had or observed when social skills were necessary. Brainstorm and come up with a list of social skills that you and your child can work on throughout the year. Below is a list of suggested social skills to work on at home with your child.

List of Suggested Social Skills

- taking turns
- helping others
- praising
- sharing materials
- asking for help
- using quiet voices
- participating
- staying on task
- saying kind things
- using people's names
- celebrating success
- sharing ideas
- organizing materials
- paraphrasing
- following directions
- resolving conflicts
- active listening
- accepting differences
- communicating clearly
- waiting patiently



2. Work on One Social Skill at a Time- When working with your child on social skills, focus on just one skill at a time. You may want to select one skill to focus on each week. Create a chart to list the skill for that week and record how the child is doing. Use a simple system such as happy face, neutral face, and sad face to show progress.

3. Talk About the Social Skill- Help your child identify what appropriate behavior looks and sounds like. For example, praising looks like a thumbs up, clapping, or smiling. Praising sounds like, "Terrific!" "I knew you could do it!" "You're so smart!" or "Way to go!" Make a list with your child of "looks like" and "sounds like" behaviors and post it next to your chart for recording the target behavior and the progress your child makes in demonstrating appropriate behavior.

4. Practice the Social Skill- After discussing what a particular social skill looks and sounds like, provide an immediate opportunity for your child to practice the appropriate social skill behavior (looks like and sounds like). Act out a scenario with your child in which he/she must use appropriate behaviors to respond in a social situation.

5. Pause, Reflect, and Review- At the end of each day, take the time to pause, reflect, and review your child's use of social skills that day. You may want to encourage your child to keep a journal to write down thoughts about the day. If your child is not yet writing, you can keep a journal together, in which you write the entries. Help your child celebrate his/her social skills successes—if you make it a big deal, your child will, too.

Parents can engage their children in these types of activities anytime during the day. Think about using time in the car or at the dinner table to discuss social skills. As parents, emphasizing the necessity of social skills is one of the most important things you can do to help your child succeed in school—but more importantly, in life.

Drive Your Way to Better Speech and Language Skills

by Kelly Faulkenberry Cheek, CCC-SLP
& Keri Spielvogel, MCD, CCC-SLP



Are you dreading those long car rides this summer with the endless cries of, "Are we there YET?" Use these simple and fun ideas to turn your children's boredom into wonderful language learning opportunities.

► Naming Objects in Categories (And They Won't Even Know They're Doing It!)

Up for a little fun? Then give these two games a try! Play a version of the game, "I'm going on a trip, and I'm going to take _____." Set the stage by going first and giving an example such as, "I'm going on a picnic, and I am going to eat a sandwich. What are you going to eat?" Have your children name as many food items as they can. Variations of this game include the beach, park, pool, mountains, toy store, etc.

Another fun game to play in the car is the "category game." This game works by one person thinking of a category and everybody trying to name things that fit in that category. Take turns and start a new category when someone can't think of anything to name. Use broad categories like colors, toys, or things in the sky. For more of a challenge, narrow the categories by adding two or more criteria (i.e., green vegetables). Make both these games into memory games by having each person attempt to remember the items and name each item before adding one of his/her own. These games enhance a child's ability to think of and name items in specific categories.

► Develop Pre-reading Skills for the "Little Guys"

Children who are learning to spell and read enjoy hunting for letters everywhere. Help them find the first letter of their names on road signs or billboards while riding in the car. Develop these pre-reading skills by finding letters to spell their whole name or other common words. This type of activity is wonderful for helping your children learn to



recognize letters. The more practice your children get with these beginning stages, the better off they will be! For those children too young for letter-hunting, look for pictures or numbers on signs. Anything that will keep your children engaged in looking for a specific picture or figure will help with pre-reading skills.

► **Take a Look Around and Tell Me What You See!**

While you are driving in the car, talk about the scenery using describing words. You might say, "There is a tall tree," or "Did you see that white horse?" Situations like these help your child learn about how to take turns while talking. You say something, and then he/she responds. Turn taking during games and normal routines helps teach children how to take turns when talking to others. During a conversation, one person speaks while the other waits to respond. It is not much fun when one person does all or none of the talking. Games like these are great during car rides because they give your child something to do, and they help them polish their language skills at the same time.



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Read Your Way to Strong Language Skills

By Keri Spielvogel, M.C.D, CCC-SLP

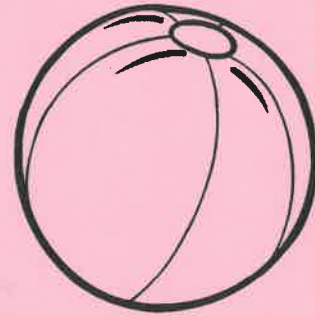


Do you have or work with children who experience difficulty naming or giving more information about pictured objects? If so, try these simple, language-building strategies while reading with your child.

Reading is a great opportunity to strengthen language skills. As a parent or teacher, you can strengthen object and picture naming by following these simple guidelines.

- * Try not to read the text “word-for-word.” Wonderful language opportunities arise simply by looking at the pictures in a book and “ad-libbing” the text.
- * When looking at a page, name the objects pictured on that page (i.e. ball, table, and puppy). As children begin to recognize the objects, expand each by adding descriptive words, or adjectives (i.e. yellow ball, long table, and small puppy).
- * Children with language difficulties often become stressed or frustrated when asked to name objects. When reading a story with these children, give them hints to help them name objects and provide details. Instead of saying, “What is this?” try saying, “Is this a shoe or a ball?” This gives the child a choice of two, decreasing the anxiety often felt by children who have trouble naming objects. If this still poses difficult for the child, simplify it further by stating, “Is this a ball?” while pointing to the correct object. If the child doesn’t answer, provide the correct response by saying, “Yes, it is a ball?”

* If children progress past choosing an object from two, but still have difficulty with direct naming, try saying, "Look, a red _____!" while pointing to the object. This technique, called cloze, allows a child to take the clues you give from the sentence's context and provide the correct answer. If a child has difficulty, provide another clue by giving the first sound of the desired word. (i.e. "Look, a red b _____!") Again, this task may be too difficult for some children. If you see or sense any frustration, try adding more details. For example, you could say, "It's something that you throw, kick, or roll. It's a b _____!" Provide the child with the correct answer if he or she is still having trouble.



Children with language delays and disorders often avoid looking at books because, in the past, the activity has been frustrating or stressful. Teach these children that reading is a wonderful opportunity! Be their guide, but above all, be patient and enjoy your time together.