



Speech and Language at Home

Parent Handout

Overview & Purpose

During this crazy time at home, it's important that kids are still getting all of the enrichment they need. Fortunately, it's not as hard as it seems! Direct engagement is crucial for language development and a simple way to do this at home is to have 20 minutes of uninterrupted play time with your child two or three times per day. Here are some tips on how you can make play with your child more meaningful and engaging, no matter what goals they are targeting.

Theme

Let's stick with the theme of the month for March: Transportation! Since we are continuing education at home, it seems fitting that we continue to use transportation to target goals and enhance speech and language. All of the activities below will incorporate our theme.

Tips

While engaging in play with your child, here are three things you can do to help improve language skills:

- **NARRATE**

- Children learn through the language models around them. While you're engaging in play with your child, talk about what you are doing while you play and what they are doing while they play! For example, while playing with a train, you could use language such as *"Look, I have a blue train. My train is driving! It's driving around the track. It's driving faster! Here it comes, chugga chugga choo choo!"* Even though it seems repetitive, repetition is a good thing!

- **EXPAND**

- When your child uses their language, expand on what they say in order to give them models of appropriate language. For example, if your child is playing with an airplane and labels *"airplane"*, you can expand that utterance to make it more meaningful. *"Wow, I see the airplane too! It's a red airplane. I see the airplane flying. The airplane is flying in the sky."*

- **WAIT**

- Although it's important to be giving children frequent models they can learn from and use, it's also important to give their brains some time to process all of the input. It's tempting as parents and caregivers to fill every silence while we're playing, but sometimes, the best thing to do is wait and see what your child says! They'll often surprise you with the language that they have picked up.

Materials Needed

Obviously, every household has access to different toys and materials. The best part about language activities is that you can use whatever you have at your disposal! Do you have toy trains, airplanes, boats, or cars? Great! Use them when you play with your child. If you don't have certain toys, it's easy to improvise. Use a block and pretend it's a car that goes driving to the store. Use a piece of paper and fold it up to make an airplane that flies over the ocean. Use plastic measuring cups that float in a bucket of water to pretend it's a boat sailing on the high seas. Kids have great imaginations and it's important that they use them!

Goals

Depending on your child's skill level and goal they are targeting, you can use different phrases and approaches to best help your child. Here are some ideas to increase language no matter what level your child is at!

Goal Targeted	Language Ideas
Building simple vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model language during play including labels of objects, colors that are seen, and sounds that the objects make (e.g., cars go <i>vroom</i>, trains go <i>chugga chugga choo choo</i>). • Model core functional words during play including <i>up</i>, <i>down</i>, <i>open</i>, <i>close</i>, and <i>more</i>. • Have your child identify different objects and give them a select set of choices. • Have your child identify colors during play. • Encourage the use of two-word phrases that use a descriptive word plus an object (e.g., <i>blue train</i>, <i>red car</i>).
Action words or "what doing?" questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model language using verbs throughout play (e.g., The car is <i>driving</i>. The plane is <i>flying</i>.) • At first, stick to verbs in the present tense (e.g., <i>drive</i>, <i>walk</i>, <i>swim</i>) or verbs that are in the present progressive form (e.g., <i>driving</i>, <i>walking</i>, <i>swimming</i>) to avoid confusion with past and future verb tenses. • Ask questions about what you and your child are playing with and answer them yourself! (e.g., <i>What is the plane doing? The plane is flying!</i>) • Have your child identify actions in the play sequence (e.g., <i>Show me what is flying.</i>).
"Who?" Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model language that refers to proper nouns or people. During this unit, we can model things that have to do with transportation like <i>"The pilot is flying the airplane."</i> or <i>"The firefighter is driving the firetruck."</i> • Ask questions about characters that you and your child are playing with and answer them yourself! (e.g., <i>"Who is driving the police car? The police officer is driving the police car!"</i>) • Create silly scenarios during play to encourage your child to comment. For example, you can have a doctor pretend

	<p>to drive the train then ask, <i>"Do doctors drive the trains? No, that's silly! Conductors drive the trains!"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your child identify different community helpers who operate different modes of transportation without requiring them to verbally label (e.g., <i>"Show me who flies an airplane."</i>).
"Where?" Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model language that includes locations or simple prepositional phrases while you play (e.g., "Wow, look at the train driving <i>on the track</i>. The boat is floating <i>in the ocean</i>."). • Start with simple and more generic locations like "Wow, look at the airplane! It's <i>in the sky</i>!". Then, work your way up to using more complex and specific locations like "I see the ambulance driving <i>to the hospital</i>." or "The train is driving <i>over the bridge</i>." • Ask 'where' questions during your play scenarios and answer them yourself! (e.g. "Where is the train? It's <i>on the track</i>." or "Where is the car driving? It's driving to the store."). • Have your child identify locations with their toys using simple prepositional phrases (e.g., "Can you make the airplane fly <i>over the trees</i>?" or "You show me the train driving <i>into the station</i>.").
"When?" Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model language that includes simple time frames that children understand, especially <i>daytime</i> and <i>nighttime</i> (e.g., "We usually get on the bus to go to school during the <i>daytime</i>. That's <i>when</i> we go to school."). • Reinforce this month's theme (transportation) with language that we used during last month's theme (light)! (e.g., Sometimes, airplanes look like stars at nighttime! Look, I can see the airplane's lights at nighttime! Can you see them?") • Ask 'when' questions about transportation items that you're playing with or interacting with around you and answer them yourself! (e.g., "Listen! I hear an ambulance. When do we hear ambulances? When there is an emergency!")

