



## Tips for Helping a Late-Talker Learn to Communicate

### Create Opportunities for Your Child to Lead Interactions:

- Place a favorite toy where your child cannot reach it, and then *wait* until he/she asks
- Offer a small amount of something, and then *wait* for him/her to ask for more
- Choose an activity for which your child needs help, then *wait* for him/her to ask
- Offer a choice between two items, then *wait* for your child to choose
- Pause in the middle of a familiar activity, then *wait* for your child to ask you to continue
- Change a familiar activity, then *wait* for your child to react
- Hide objects in surprising places, then *wait* for your child to react

### Follow Your Child's Lead to Enhance Interactions:

- Respond *immediately* and with interest whenever your child begins an interaction
- Join in and play with your child even when he/she does not start an interaction
- *Play* like a child, using “fun” sounds and words (e.g., “whee!” “rrraahhr!”)
- *Imitate* your child by copying his/her actions, facial expressions, sounds, and words
  - If your child mispronounces a word, respond by repeating the word correctly and then continuing the interaction without drawing attention to the mispronunciation
- *Interpret* your child's message by labeling what you think he/she is trying to communicate
- *Comment* on what your child is doing or saying by using simple, clear language
- *Follow through* by cooperating with a request your child has made or explaining why you cannot

### Take Turns to Keep the Interaction Going:

- Match your turns to your child's turns by modifying the length and pace of your turns, and showing interest in your child's interests
- Cue your child to take a turn by using facial expressions, body language, *waiting*, and gentle hand-over-hand help
- Ask appropriate questions that will continue the interaction (e.g., choice questions, yes-or-no questions, wh-questions) and not questions that will stop the interaction (e.g., questions that are too difficult for your child to answer, questions that answer themselves, or questions that prevent your child from giving a more elaborate answer)
- Introduce routines to encourage turn taking (e.g., peekaboo, hide and seek, tickle, chase, horsie ride, songs and rhymes)

### Add Language to the Interaction:

- Talk about what is happening right now, use specific words, and use a variety of words
- Use simple language, stress important words, slow your rate, and add actions or gestures
- Expand on your child's language production by adding something to a comment or request they have made

### **RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES:**

1. Play is a great way to stimulate language with children. Various toys and games may be used in the home and other settings. For example:
  - Use a farmhouse with farm animal figures to stimulate vocabulary and language use (i.e., naming animals; dialogue between the animals; spatial concepts, such as “Put the horse *in* the barn. Now take him *out*. Is the chicken *on* the barn?”).
2. Sing nursery rhymes and songs such as “Twinkle, twinkle little star; Row your boat; Happy Birthday; Itsy-Bitsy Spider, B-I-N-G-O, Wheels on the bus.” The melody and repetition in these songs helps prompt imitation and sound production.
3. Use verbal gestures (ex. “uh-oh, bye-bye, whoa, yea, whoo-hoo, wow, ta-da”) in familiar routines. These gestures are typically vowels with occasional consonant-vowel combinations. They are a fun way to encourage verbal imitation and pave the way for future sound production.
4. Make animal sounds while playing with a farm set. These sounds are primarily composed of consonant and vowel combinations (ex. “moo, baa, neigh”) and are a great ways to practice combining sounds.
5. Simplify words you expect your child to imitate to simple consonants and vowels that he can already produce. For example, instead of prompting him to say “Teddy Bear”, model the word “Bear” or “Teddy”/”Tehh-Deee”.
6. Pairing sounds or words with a gesture may also help with imitation. For example, when stacking blocks, you can model “Top” or “On Top” each time you move a block from the ground to the top of the tower.
7. Use familiar anticipatory phrases (e.g., “Ready, Set, ...” “One, two, ...”) in your speech and wait several seconds to see if your child will fill them in. Using these types of phrases and waiting with the expectation that the child will complete them typically increases communicative attempts.
8. Narrate daily routines using 2-3 word phrases including “noun + action” words. For example, during bath time “water on, splash-splash, get soap, wash hair, dry off”.