

Parent Strategies for Maximizing Speech and Language Skills

Listening

- ✓ Make sure you have your child's attention before you speak. Get down on his or her level. Obtain eye contact.
- ✓ Introduce new words and concepts by labeling what your child is doing and experiencing (e.g., building, playing, drawing, etc.)
- ✓ Assign simple tasks. Engaging children in small jobs helps them to learn to follow directions.
- ✓ Give your child clear instructions that help him or her move from simple directions to a more complex sequence of directions. In order to reinforce understanding of directions with more than one step have your child repeat back the directions to you.
- ✓ Be expressive. Use gestures and props to help your child understand and respond to verbal directions and questions.
- ✓ Use books and pictures to help increase your child's understanding and ability to respond to all types of questions.
- ✓ Model good listening skills. Notice and respond to what your child says and does. Ask questions and pause to give them time to think and respond.

Speaking

- ✓ Encourage your child to express his or her thoughts or feelings.
- ✓ Pause after speaking. This gives your child the chance to continue the conversation. A young talker may need extra time to plan what he/she wants to say.
- ✓ As you read to your child or talk with him, pause to let him ask questions, make comments and complete ideas.
- ✓ Encourage your child to discuss, predict and add to stories as you read them. Ask, for example, "What do you think will happen next?" Use pictures to help.

- ✓ Use descriptive language. Expand upon what your child says to model language for them. If your child observes, "Dog" respond, "Yes, that is a big, white dog."
- ✓ Talk daily about everyday events and activities. Point out and encourage children to talk about things they see, such as vehicles, colors, and items at the grocery store.
- ✓ Show interest in what your child has to say by asking open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" response. Examples are "What did you make in art class today?" or "Who did you play with at school?"
- ✓ Encourage your child to give directions. Follow his directions as he describes how to play a game, draw a picture, or put together a toy.