

Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



Barrier Games- Parent

Barrier games are a fun way to develop listening skills, oral language skills, social language skills, clear talking and understanding and use of concepts. They are great for extending the amount of information your child can understand or express within a sentence.

Barrier games require a listener, a speaker, two identical sets of materials and a barrier such as a large book that will stand up. The barrier is placed between the two players so that each can not see the others materials. The speaker then arranges his materials and describes to the listener what s/he is doing. The listener arranges his/her materials in the same way. When completed, the barrier is removed and the materials should look the same.

Materials can include blocks, Lego, miniature objects, animals and figures, sticker sets, picture cards, coloured pencils and paper, real objects, maths materials, collage materials.

Your speech pathologist can supply you with picture sets to use.

Using the picture sets:

1. Cut up the small pictures. Each player should have one background sheet and one set of small pictures. Sit facing each other. Set down the background sheet and lay out the small pictures so that the child can see all of his pictures. Place your own background sheet and small pictures in front of yourself.

2. Check that the child knows the names of all the small pictures. If there are any he/she does not know remove them or teach the child the name.

3. Explain to the child you are going to play a game to see that you are good listeners and talkers. Explain that you will put your pictures onto the background and tell the child what to do to make their picture look the same as yours. Tell them that they need to listen carefully, because they will not be able to see what you are doing. Stand up the barrier and explain that this is so that the child cannot see what you are doing and needs to listen carefully.

4. Place your small pictures on the background and give the child clear instructions about how to put their pictures in the same position. Make sure you give your child enough time to respond before giving the next instruction.



5. When you have placed all the pictures on the background take the barrier away and talk to your child about the pictures that they have placed in the correct position. Explain to them that this means they have listened carefully. Explain the correct position of any pictures that the child may not have placed correctly.

6. Play the game again and this time, tell your child that it is their turn to talk. Explain that you will listen carefully and make your pictures look the same as theirs. Put the barrier up again and ask the child to tell you where to put the pictures. If your child's instructions are not clear, you may need to cue them such as if your child says "put the car there" you might say "I've got the car, but I'm not sure where to put it".

7. Take the barrier away and look at all the pictures that are correctly positioned and tell your child how this means that they did a good job of talking and that you listened carefully. Talk about any pictures that are in the incorrect position. Model the correct instruction such as "under the tree".

Once your child understands how to play barrier games, you can use a range of items from around the house to make your own games. You can use cut out pictures, from catalogues or clip art, objects and small toys from around the house, and toy or sticker sets from "cheap shops".

You can gradually make a barrier against more difficult by increasing the length and complexity of the instructions, and the number of items that need to be placed. You can introduce concepts of space such as: in, on, under, next to, above and below. You can also introduce concepts of colour and size.

