

Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: To learn through play

The most important part of playing with your child is having fun together. When you are having fun together, you are helping your child develop their communication skills

The Power of Play

Play is one of the most important ways that your child learns about the world. From playing with adults and children, your child learns how to interact and get along with others. Play also helps develop your child's problem-solving skills. By experimenting with toys, your child will make interesting discoveries (eg. which toys float in the bath). Playing with materials like paper, glue, playdough, paint and sand helps develop creativity and imagination.

The best thing about play is that it helps your child learn many, many words and important ideas about the world. Your child will learn that they go *up* the stairs and *down* the slide. Your child will discover that block is *too big* to fit into a little cup, and your child may pretend that the soup they have just made for you is *too hot*. Once your child understands these words and ideas, they may be ready to try saying them. It is easy to see that play skills and communication skills develop hand in hand.

Get Involved in the Play

A successful play activity begins with you and your child interacting and having fun. To get things going, keep in mind these three strategies:

- **Join in the play**
Find a way to join in with what your child is doing. If your child doesn't play with the toys the way you expect them to, just 'go with the flow'. Let them explore and enjoy the toys in their own way and see where they play takes you. The communication between you doesn't have to be about anything in particular. What is important is simply that you and your child are communicating.
- **Create opportunities for your child to take turns**
If your child doesn't include you in their play even when you join in, you will have to find another way in. One way to get involved in the play is by creating opportunities for your child to take turns in the interaction. You can do this by making sure that your child needs to communicate with you to get what you want. For example, choose a toy that they can't operate on their own, or hold on to pieces they need to operate the toy.
- **Use play routines to SPARK an interaction**
 - Start the same way each time**
 - Plan your child's turn**
 - Adjust the routine so your child can take their turn**
 - Repeat the same actions, sounds and words each time**



Let's play

This handout has been compiled using the Hanen books "It Takes Two to Talk" by Jan Pepper and Elaine Weitzman (2004), and "You Make the Difference In Helping Your Child Learn" by Ayala Manolson, Barbara Ward, and Nancy Dodington (2007).

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Keep the end the same

Go With Games

Games can help your child to:

- Learn actions and sounds
- Practice taking turns
- Practice taking chances
- Discover pretending
- Learn to get along with others



Playing Games

Allow your child to lead by thinking like a child.

Remember to:

- Play face to face
- Imitate your child to help them copy you
- Interpret: say what your child would say if she could talk
- Watch for your child taking a turn and help them extend this

Add new experiences and words by:

- Using gestures
- Making important words stand out
- Adding a word or action
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Building on what your child knows



Ideas for Games

Babies & Toddlers	Pre-Schoolers	School Age
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patter cake, peek a boo and hiding • Pots and pans • Nursery rhymes • Games with blocks • Games with balls • Simple card games and puzzles • Simple pretend play and dress ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cars, trucks and trains • Dolls, puppets and fluffy animals • Blocks with farm animals • Card games • Simple board games • Dressing up and pretending • Tea sets, cooking and cleaning sets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More complex card and board games • Pretending with more complex props

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