

Talking Matters

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 Helping your child to reach their potential



Developing communication skills in school aged children.

When children start school their language skills still continue to develop and the stronger their language skills are, the better they will progress, especially with subjects such as reading, writing and spelling.

Children between the ages of five and seven have developed the basics of speech and language but their communication continues to develop. Vocabulary develops all through life and children beginning school learn lots of new words. They also learn new concepts and develop their ability to listen to, remember and understand more complex information. While most basic grammar is learnt in the first five years, older children continue to learn to understand and use more complex sentences and to link sentences together into larger units such as stories and procedures. There is a lot to learn and the things that parents do at home are still vitally important to a child's development.



1. Keep on reading to your child. Don't stop reading to them just because they are starting to read themselves. Children can't read at the level of their understanding until around 10 years of age so keep reading to them as often as you can, but read them more complex books than they can read themselves. Ask your local library staff to recommend books your child may enjoy. Well written children's stories and novels are fun to read for adults to. Kids love funny stories such as those by Roald Dahl and fantasy such as by Emily Rhodda and there are lots of great kids classics. Why not share a book you loved as a child?

2. Show your interest in what your child is learning. Talk to your child about what they learn each day. Look at the things they make and talk about them together. Put your child's work on display and encourage them to show it to others. Your interest tells your child their learning is important and explaining information to another person helps with recall and understanding.

3. Build on what your child is learning at school. Many classrooms have theme based lessons. Ask your child's teacher what your child is learning about and extend this. If your child is learning about dinosaurs you could borrow some dinosaur books, find some dinosaur websites or go the museum and see some real dinosaur bones.



4. Connect language to your daily activities. When you do activities at home use these as an opportunity to develop your child's language skills. For example when making a cake you could read a recipe together, talk about the ingredients and any other words your child might not be familiar with to develop vocabulary, write a shopping list together to develop literacy skills, go to the shops and buy the ingredients, look, touch, taste and talk about the ingredients to develop concepts and descriptive language, follow the steps make the cake to develop procedural (steps in a sequence) language, share the cake and the steps to making it with someone else to reinforce the procedural language.



5. Allow your child to see you using language in a range of ways and involve your child when you can. Let your child see you opening mail, paying bills, filling in forms, writing cards and invitations, reading the newspaper, books, newsletters and magazines, searching for information on line, using recipes, instructions and maps.

6. Play language and listening games together. Play games like "eye spy", "I went shopping and I bought.....". Buy your child word based activity books and work on them together. Look online for some printable kid's word activities. Your child's teacher may be able to suggest some that suit your child's level. Make cards with your child's sight words on them and use them to play matching and memory games.

7. Use technology to make your own language activities. Kids love things that are about themselves. Use a digital camera to make your own books, card games and power point displays. Take a series photos of your child doing something interesting and help your child add words to make a book or power point about what they did. You can do this using daily activities, outings or craft or cooking activities. Make a book to keep about something special such as a birthday party or school concert.

In all the activities remember to keep things fun and positive. Make it feel like a special sharing time together, not like hard work. Introduce new words and ideas gradually and repeat them lots of times. Model the correct way of doing or saying things if your child makes a mistake, but be encouraging so they keep on trying and learning.

Developing your child's language skills will prepare them well for learning at school and also help them develop a lifelong love of language and learning.

Have fun learning language together!

