

Things to Consider as you Communicate with your Young Child

1. **Speak clearly**, enunciating all sounds within the words trying not to be obvious.
2. Be at the **child's eye level** so the child can see your mouth and expressions.
3. **Provide the dialogue** for what the child sees or does. For example, "Oh, look! You're making the train go on the track. It's going fast! Wow!"
4. **Affirm**, ("yes"), **repeat** (ex. "You see a dog.") and **expand** upon (ex. "You see a BIG dog!") what the child says "Dog!". You say: "Yes, you see a BIG dog!"
5. Model back **corrected versions** of errors with emphasis on the corrections. (ex. Child: "Him want more cookies." Adult: "Oh yes, *he wants* more cookies.")
6. **Use the proper words** for objects/activities. For example, when the child asks for his/her 'bubba', say: "Yes, you want your *bottle! Bottle.*" Try to discourage others from reinforcing the use of improper labels or "cute" words because unfamiliar listeners will not understand the message.
7. Encourage back and forth, **taking turns in the conversation** by answering questions or furthering the discussion.
8. **Ask open-ended questions**, such as "what do you think will happen?" Minimize asking yes/no questions, except when necessary.
9. **Follow the child's lead** - try to play what s/he is interested in. You might find that you have more fun! Research shows children have larger vocabularies when parents talk about objects/actions of interest to the children.
10. When giving directions, be sure s/he is looking at you. Be sure you **have full attention** (i.e. Don't compete with the TV!).
11. **Be sure s/he understands** the directions (understands vocabulary, concepts, prepositions, etc.). You may want her/him to repeat what was heard for understanding.
12. **Relate new vocabulary to what is already known** or to actual representations.
13. **Use gestures** when words are difficult to understand.
14. **Give choices**, such as "Do you want to play with the blocks or with the trucks?" Making choices empowers children!
15. **Put desired objects out of reach** to encourage children to use communication to get needs met.
16. It's ok to say sentences just as you typically would - using understandable vocabulary. However, when trying to help your child start talking, **say that sentence then break it down into the two most important words** within the sentence. For example, you might say: "Oh look at the cold bubbly water. Look water." In doing this, you are helping your child focus on what is most important to say or repeat.
17. Be an attentive and focused listener.
18. Most important of all – **BE A PARTNER and HAVE FUN!**