

When children are just beginning to talk:

- Play alongside the child. This is considered parallel play and is developmental and typically comfortable.
- Attempt to enter into the child's play, such as driving a car into the child's roadway *or* entering the kitchen where the child is cooking food and request food *or* take a puppet and put it on your hand to communicate with the other puppets in the child's play.
- Talk about what you are doing.
- Talk about what the child is doing.
- When the child talks, affirm, repeat and expand on what the child said. For example, child says, "vroom vroom". Say, "*Yes, vroom vroom, the car goes vroom vroom.*"
- As you add information onto the child's utterance, add modifiers (ex. size, color, texture, shape words) and prepositions (ex. *in, on, up, down, out, over*).
- While you add the above words, children are learning these concepts associated in their play. Ex. Daddy said, 'red car' so this must be a red car. Through hands on experiences and association, children learn.
- Instead of asking questions, such as '*what color is it?*' and '*where is the dog?*', just offer the information: "*Oh you have a red dog*". This will put less pressure on the child to perform for you and make the child more comfortable to begin talking. Children LOVE when parents get down on the floor, act silly and just play with the toys, too. This is learning through play! ***Play is a child's work!***
- Most children enjoy when parents/adults play dumb. Act like you don't know what the child wants when the child gestures instead of speaking. If you do know what the child wants, try to give the child something silly instead. For example, when you know the child wants juice, give him a shoe instead. "*Oh, you don't want a shoe, you must want a sock? Oh, silly me. You must want a carrot. Oh you want juice!*" Be certain to get to the real item for the reward in a timely fashion, but don't be afraid to be silly for a bit.
- Set up a problem the child needs to solve. For example, make the moving car get stuck on the rug. Have the child help you solve the problem. Talk about what the child does as the solution is found.

Mostly, ***TAKE THE TIME TO HAVE FUN PLAYING. ENJOY YOUR CHILDREN!***

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