

Developing Sentences with Very Simple Grammar

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Children develop grammar forms, when they begin combining words into phrases and sentences. And they do that by listening to adult productions. It starts when they reach about 50 – 200 words. For modeling adults, speak typically using sentences to comment or respond to questions. Then fine-tune longer sentences to the most important 1-2 words in the sentence. Responding in such a fashion, allows children to hear, then speak the most important words – achieving meaningful communications quickly. This is known as telegraphic speaking. For example:

While pointing at a car on a hill, adult says: *See the big red car on the hill? See the car? See car?*
Child repeats: *See car?*

Functional two-word combinations (Note: nouns are labels, verbs are actions)

Noun + verb *John walks.*

Verb + locator *Jump over.*

Noun + locator *Bear here.*

Verb + descriptor *Big jump.*

Noun + descriptor *Big cookie.*

To develop word combinations, expand upon a child's one word answer to a question. Ask specific probing questions about colors, size, texture, number, and location. For example:

Adult: What did you eat for breakfast?

Child: Cereal.

Adult: What kind of cereal did you eat?

Child: Cocoa Puffs.

Adult: Yes, you ate cocoa puffs for breakfast today.

Child: Cocoa puffs today.

About Prepositions (location words). For example: *in, on, off, up, down, over, under.* It's ***under*** the box.

About Pronouns (smaller words representing people and animals). For example: *he, she, they, him, her, them, hers, his, theirs, our, we us.* Early on, young children often err on these complicated representations, but with continued practice and appropriate modeling, they learn. *Sandra is going. Yes, **she** is going.*

About Descriptors (words that add flavor, interest and specifics to nouns and verbs). For example: *more, big, little, red, blue, fast, slow.* That horse is ***fast***.

Encouraging longer sentences provides more clarity within messages.

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