

Things to Keep in Mind While Playing with Children

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1. Speak clearly. Enunciate all sounds in words.
2. Be at the child's eye level so they see your mouth and expressions.
3. Narrate what the child sees or does. E.g., *Look! You're making the train go on the track. It's going fast! Wow! Fast train!*
4. Affirm, (*Yes.*), repeat (*You see a dog.*), expand (*You see a BIG dog!*), then repeat again. *Yes, you see a BIG dog!* The child hears *dog* a few times.
5. Model back corrected versions of errors with emphasis on the corrections. E.g., Child says: *Him want more cookies.* Adult says: Yes. **He wants** more cookies.
6. Use the proper words for objects/activities. E.g., when the child asks for *bubba*, respond with: *Yes, you want your bottle! Bottle.* As well, discourage others from reinforcing improper labels because unfamiliar listeners will not understand.
7. Encourage back-and-forth, turn-taking in conversations. Answer questions and further discussion.
8. Ask open-ended questions. E.g., What do you think will happen? Yes/no questions present one-word answers. Open-ended questions encourage more language.
9. Follow the child's lead. Play what interests them. Research shows that children develop larger vocabularies when adults talk about things of interest to them.
10. Relate new vocabulary to what is already known or to actual representations.
11. Use gestures to support when words are challenging to understand.
12. Present choices. E.g., *Do you want to play with blocks or trucks?* Making choices empowers children!
13. When giving directions, be sure child is looking at you and fully attending. Be sure directions are understood. Ask child to repeat to confirm understanding.
14. Put desired objects out of reach to encourage children to communicate for their needs and wants.
15. Most important of all, be a fully attentive, conversational partner.

Have fun!

