Getting Started with Improving Your Child's Language & Play Skills

Language Strategies:

Use Shorter Sentences: During everyday activities, use one to two-word phrases (e.g., "Shoes on" vs. "Let's put your shoes on") so your child has a simple model of what to copy

Label Objects and Actions: When your child points to something, label what they are pointing to (e.g. "A car"). Avoid using words like "this" and "that" to label things

Self-talk: During everyday activities, describe what you see or are doing (e.g. "I am pouring you some milk")

Parallel-talk: When your child is playing, describe what your child is doing/seeing (e.g. "you are stacking blocks")

Imitation: Copy what your child says to confirm you are listening to them. Repeating what they say will also model correct grammar and pronunciation.

Expansion: Repeat what your child says and make it longer, adding one or two words (e.g. "bus"....."big school bus").

Wait Time: Pause after you have said something to give your child time to process what you said. Pausing also encourages them to respond.

Comment Often: Decrease the number of questions and commands you give your child. Comment and provide repetition of common daily language and experiences.

Offer Choices: Find opportunities to let your child use a sign or word to let you know what they want by offering them a choice (e.g., "Do you want milk or water?")

Play and Language Strategies:

- Slow your speech rate down
- Reward them for their communication efforts
- Listen hard and try to interpret
- Correctly model what your child is trying to say
- Allow your child to lead
- Take turns
- Be animated
- Play at their level, get face to face

Book Reading Strategies:

Select Books with: Four Strategies for Reading Books:

Bright pictures Slow down

Interactive: flaps and textures Show more (pretend to wear the hats, eat the food, pet the dog, etc.)

Few words Say less

Predictable patterns, repetition, routines Stress important words

Tips for Encouraging Interactions with Books

- Follow your child's lead and talk about what they are interested in (or pointing to)
- Avoid testing your child (e.g. "what's that?") and add comments instead (e.g. "there's a doggy.")
- Let them turn the pages. Remember, it's ok if they turn more than one page at a time
- Try reading face to face so you have eye contact with your child and they can watch your mouth
- Expand your child's phrases
- Use hand gestures, signs or facial expressions to bring excitement to the interaction
- Turn book reading into a conversation

For Busy Kids with Short Attention Spans- Do active tasks first to expel energy. Try doing something BIG and FUN like jumping, playing chase, swinging in a blanket, etc. Then, sit down for story time.

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Behavior Strategies for Play & Language:

"You Can" Statements: When you tell your child they can do something, we are building in an automatic reinforcing statement, as well as providing a direction for them to follow. By wording things this way, the child does not have the opportunity to tell us "no".

"Do" Language vs. "Don't" Language: Tell your child what they *ARE* able to do as opposed to what they *AREN'T* able to do. Children don't understand the contractions 'don't, won't, can't, etc'.

<u>Example:</u> If a child is constantly climbing on furniture to jump off, you can tell them to put their feet on the floor instead of "don't climb". Same goes with hitting or biting, if you *tell the child what they can do* with their mouth instead of what they can't do, they are more likely to follow through on the direction.

Precision Commands: Help your child follow one-step directions when they understand what you are telling them (Adapted from Melissa Geneaux)

Step 1: "Child's Name (Direction) Please."

Example: "Johnny get your shoes please."

Wait 3-5 Seconds Compliance = Praise Non-compliance - Go to Step 2

Step 2: "Child's Name You <u>NEED</u> (Direction)."

Example: "Johnny you NEED to get your shoes."

Wait 3-5 Seconds Compliance = Praise Non-compliance – Go to Step 3

Step 3: "That's not following directions. That's a ____ (pre-planned consequence)"

Example: "That's not following directions. That's a time-out"