

# Tips for Supporting Language

Toddlers learn new language and communication skills through every day conversations with their caregivers and educators. Find some key strategies for building conversations and language development in your interactions with children! You can also find detailed tip sheets on the key strategies at the end of this document!

## Notice, Respond, Pause

1. Pay close attention to all forms of child communication (words, gestures, vocalizations, eye contact).
2. Respond each time a child communicates by making a comment about what they are doing or what they are interested in.
3. Pause after you make a comment, to leave time for a child to communicate back.
4. Build a conversation--try for 3-5 back and forth turns each time you talk with a child.

## Comment, Don't Quiz! Model Simple Sentences

Use simple, descriptive sentences in your conversations with children--these types of sentences can help build children's vocabulary

## Add on

Expand children's language by adding on to their communication to model new words and sentences

## Show it

Use gestures (like pointing, showing, or giving) as you talk to children to help emphasize words



# COMMENT, DON'T QUIZ!

Modeling simple sentences about what children are noticing and doing helps them learn new words and how to form sentences.  
You can comment on...

## What an object is doing

### If a child...

Pretends to feed a babydoll

Looks at a ball rolling down a ramp

### You could say...

"The baby is eating"

"The ball is rolling"

## Where objects are going

### If a child...

Pushes a toy down a ramp

Pushes a train under a bridge

### You could say...

"It went down"

"The train is going under"

## How something changed

### If a child...

Finishes their juice

Fills a bucket with sand

### You could say...

"The cup is empty"

"It is full"

## What an object is

### If a child...

Reaches for a train

Watches a ball rolling down a ramp

### You could say...

"Train"

"A ball"



Adapted from the EMT-SF Intervention Materials created by the Vanderbilt Kidtalk Lab, Northwestern Early Intervention Research Group, and the University of Illinois Applied Psycholinguistics Lab  
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# ADD ON!

Children give us the opportunity to introduce new language each time they communicate with us. Adding on is a specific way to respond to children's communication, by adding on to what they communicated.

Adding words on to what a child says helps them learn to make sentences out of the words they already know, learn new vocabulary, and build stronger sentences.

## Replace children's general words with more specific language

<u>If a child says...</u>	<u>You could say...</u>
"That" while reaching for a blanket	"Blanket"
"There" while pointing to their plate	"On the plate"

## Turn children's words into a sentence

<u>If a child says...</u>	<u>You could say...</u>
"Go"	"The cars are going down!"
"Paint on"	"The paint is on your fingers"
"Eat"	"The animals are eating"



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# SHOW IT!

When we are talking to children, using gestures and body language can help them make clear connections to what we are talking about.

## Modeling Nouns

**Point** to toys, objects, or pictures in a book while you talk about them

*"The blanket fell off!"  
{point to the blanket}*

**Hold up and label** toys or objects when you're playing

*"The bus! {hold up a toy bus you are playing with}*

Label objects or toys as you **hand them** to a child

*"The ball can go down the ramp next! {hand child a ball}*



## Modeling Action and Descriptive Words

**Act it out:** Try acting out action and descriptive words as you say them to children

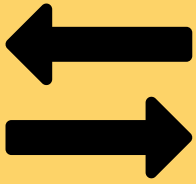
*"The cat is climbing!" {use your hands to pretend you are climbing up a ladder}*

*"The penguin is cold!" {rub your hands against your arms and pretend to be cold}*

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# Supporting Language and Emotional Literacy

We can use our core language and communication support strategies when we talk with children about their emotions. This can help them build emotional literacy and learn to communicate about their feelings (or the feelings of others)



## Build Back and Forth Conversations

Try for 3-5 back and forth turns with children about their emotions. Use the respond and pause strategy or open ended questions to encourage children to communicate about their feelings.

## Model labels and simple sentences

When talking about emotions, use simple sentences to label and describe emotions during play and stories. For example:  
*"The dragon is stomping his feet. He is mad"*  
*"The boy is jumping up and down! I think he is excited!"*



## Add on to children's communication

When a child communicates about an emotion, use the "add on" strategy to model a sentence. For example:  
Child: Happy {points to a dog smiling in a storybook}  
Teacher: "The dog is happy! He has a big smile"

