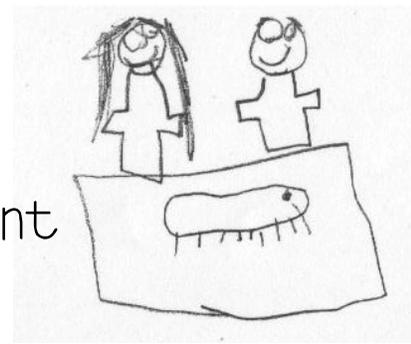


Strategies to Support Oral Language Development



1. Build vocabulary

Use expanded vocabulary when you talk with your child, look for opportunities to introduce new words. Try to use a variety of terms for words you use often. Instead of big – use gigantic, colossal, humongous, huge. Use lots of terms for emotions like disappointed, joyful, frustrated, anxious, cheerful, excited, elated.

Introduce new words in combination with familiar words.

“That is so big, it is colossal!”

“You seem very cheerful and happy today!”

After you introduce a new word, look for opportunities to use it again and again.

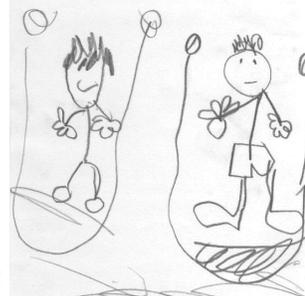
2. Narrative talk

We use narrative talk when we relay information or tell stories that occurred in another place or another time. This strategy encourages use of past, present and future tenses. Generally the type of narrative talk that is most interesting to children is about that child, or about the adult who is speaking to him.

“This morning when we couldn’t find your shoes ...”

“When I was a little girl ...”

“When you were just a baby ...”



3. Explanatory talk

The purpose of this strategy is to explain how something works, how something is made or how something happened.

Explanations can show causes and intentions behind actions, events or feelings. This helps children develop links between ideas, events and actions. It is also a good way to introduce new vocabulary.

4. Primary experiences

In order to develop oral language children need rich, repeated experiences. These help children make sense of their world and understand concepts. Some examples are shoveling snow, eating pizza, going to the zoo, riding in a car. Of course these experiences are much more valuable when the activity is enriched by discussing and noticing things with your child.

5. Conversations

Friendships allow children to take other's point of view, to listen, disagree, solve problems, explain their own viewpoint. In order to do these things children must be able to think about their own thinking and talk about language intent. Both of these are directly related to literacy skills. Supporting children's friendships enhances social development as well as language and literacy development.

6. Reading books and stories

Interactive discussions before, during and after reading enhance oral language experiences.

Discussion can be focused just on the pictures for very young children, or on story content within the book. You can also use these discussions to introduce new vocabulary, notice other viewpoints, think about why characters acted in different ways, and how the story could have been told differently.

Another great strategy is to make connections. Brain research shows that children learn best when new learning is connected to previous learning. You can notice connections between stories that are similar in some way, or connections between the story and the child's life.

7. Play

During play children often use higher vocabulary than during other speaking times. They also use higher levels of language – create imaginative scenarios, wonder what might happen, ask questions. Dramatic play allows children to take on roles and other points of view.

These strategies are not new. The point is that there are many opportunities to help your child develop oral language, we just need to be aware of these situations, and take the time to talk and listen.

