

Things parents can do at home to enhance the speech and language development of their toddler.

Model Clear, Simple Sentences Be sure to slow down and get down at your child's level. Repeat what your child has said and expand on it. If your child says, "Big car," you respond by saying, "Yes, that is a big car. A big red car. Let's make it go fast." This can be done during play, at the grocery store, or wherever your day takes you and your child!

Make It a Game The above concept can be turned into a simple game using a bag filled with common objects from around the house. Have your child pull out one object at a time. You repeat whatever your child says, then expand on it.

Reading Expand your child's vocabulary through reading books with simple sentences on each page.

Describe People with Simple Sentences Look at family photos together and use simple sentences to describe the people, places, objects and actions. For example, "There is daddy! Daddy is sitting on the sand. He is at the beach."

Use Family Photos to Create Your Own Books Write a simple sentence on each page below a single picture. Your child will enjoy reading these homemade books with you while enhancing early literacy skills!

Sing Simple Songs and Tell Nursery Rhymes These songs and games introduce your child to the rhythm and sounds of language. Songs and rhymes paired with gestures increases the fun and helps your child improve motor and imitation skills.

Offer Your Child Choices To Help Him Communicate Better Rather than asking your child, "Do you want milk?" you could present your child options "Do you want milk or juice?". Have the options visible so your child can gesture to the one she wants. Say the name as you give it to her.

Create Language Routines Around Favorite Activities Your little one loves bubbles? Create a repeating language routine. "Let's play bubbles", "Blow the bubbles", "pop, pop, pop", "uh-oh, all-gone", "again!" Repeat as long as he's interested. (think bathtime, mealtime, bedtime routines)

Praise Successful Communication Attempts This helps build self-confidence for your child and lets her know that she has something important to say!

If you still have concerns about your child, reach out for a FREE phone consultation on my website

(Excerpt from Stephanie's contribution to an article published in Parenting OC Magazine, July 2011)