



Speaking

Speaking is the physical act of using your voice, lips, tongue and breath to form words.

It's how we say what we want to say and requires a good word-bank (vocabulary), knowing how to put words together into sentences and knowing the rules for talking about the past or about plurals. It also requires the ability to organise sentences logically in a way that is understood by the listener.

When you are speaking remember to

- Look at the person you are speaking to
- Use a good voice – not too loud or too soft
- Speak clearly
- Keep your body still
- Think about what you want to say
- Check the person you are talking to has understood

A child who has a larger vocabulary will express themselves better and find learning and reading easier than a child with a less developed vocabulary

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary means how many words a child knows. It includes knowing the word as well as its meaning and how it relates to other words (semantics). A child who has a larger vocabulary will express themselves better and find learning and reading easier than a child with a less developed vocabulary.

Children understand more words than they use.

- The words your child uses is called their expressive vocabulary
- The words your child understands is their receptive vocabulary

A picture of typical vocabulary growth

1

Between 12 - 18 months of age

- Children use their first word at around 12 months of age
- Between 12-18 months they use a vocabulary of between 20 – 50 words

3

By 3 years old

- By 3 years the vocabulary they use grows to between 900 – 1,000 words

4

By 4 years old

- By 4 years the vocabulary they use grows to between 1,500 – 1,600 words

5

By 5 years old

- By 5 years the vocabulary they use grows to between 2,100 – 2,200 words

6

By 6 years old

- By 6 years the vocabulary they use grows to about 2,600 words. They understand between 20,000 - 24,000 words

(Loraine, 2008)



Strategy 1: Exposure to different word environments

'Word routines' happen when you and your child are involved in the same activities on a daily basis and speech is almost an automated response.

- Change your child's daily routine and activities – Going new places or doing new activities exposes your child to words not used in their ordinary routine. *Example: A trip to the zoo can introduce new words such as queue ("We have to wait in the queue to get in"), enclosure, tickets and timetable.*
- Change the language of your daily routine – This exposes your child to new words and helps them understand different words with similar meanings. *Example: Instead of calling out "dinner time", why not mix it up with "everyone to the table for tea" or "your food is ready, let's all sit down together".*

Strategy 2: Include printed words in your child's day

- Vary how your child experiences printed words – Sometimes read to your child, sometimes ask your child to read to you, and sometimes 'read the pictures' and make up new stories together.
- Read about different topics – Different topics expose your child to a new set of words and how they are used.
- Model reading used in everyday life – Talk about signs you and your child see in the car and what they mean, or show/discuss a label with your child when you are shopping together. *Example: "Oops, look at this label, it says this cheese is hard. We need to find the one that says soft".*



Strategy 3: Understanding word types

Your child needs to understand how to use a range of different word-types, as shown in the table to the right.

- Use different word types – Whether it's how things are named (noun) or described (adjective), all the listed word types have a role to play in forming effective communications.
- Provide context for new words or phrases – This can be done by using a word they know then substituting in the new word (*This box is big, see how enormous it is?*), using a comparison they understand (*This box isn't little is it, it's enormous*) or by physically demonstrating your meaning (*This box is so enormous I can't get my arms around it*).
- Help your child understand the relationships between words – This can include rhyming, words that have the same sounds in them and words that start with the same sound.

Nouns	objects and items you can see, hold, touch and feel. A cat
Adjectives	words used to describe nouns. A big cat
Verbs	action words. The big cat is running .
Adverbs	words that describe the action. The big cat is running fast .
Pronouns	words that take the place of the noun. He is running fast.
Articles	a, an, the – occur before the noun. The big cat is running fast.
Prepositions	location words. The big cat is running on the path.
Negatives	make something negative – not. He is not running.
Interrogatives	ask questions. Is the big cat running?

(Spielvogle, 2002)

If your child uses the same words to describe things, then expose them to other relevant words

Activity Guide: Learning adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe nouns and are an important tool for a child to be able share what they can see and what they are feeling.

Size (big/little, short/long, tall/short, thin/fat, thick/thin etc.)

- Nesting objects – put little objects into big objects
- Sorting the washing – compare Dad's big t-shirt to the child's little t-shirt etc.
- Drawing long and short lines in the sand
- Speaking of everyday things in respect to their size. *Example: A big dog.*

Colours

- Ask your child to find objects around the house that are the same colour
- Give your child a range of coloured objects and ask them to sort them
- Get your child to match socks by colour ready for you to fold
- Point out colours of familiar objects
- Describe colour in the context of things your child is familiar with. *Example: "Your ball is green", "The sky is blue" etc.*

Sound (loud/quiet, noisy/silent)

- Give your child a pile of noise-making objects and help them find out which ones are loud and which are quiet
- Give your child the name of the object and have them guess whether it is noisy or silent. *Example: Lion, yes a lion is loud – it has a big loud roar. Book, yes a book is quiet – it does not make much noise.*

If your child uses the same words to describe things, then expose them to other relevant words. For example, if you child constantly describes their food as 'yummy' encourage them to elaborate with words such as 'sweet', 'sour', 'crunchy', 'chewy' or 'delicious'.



Activity Guide: Learning pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of a noun. They are the 'he' or 'she', 'me' or 'them' that replaces a person's name, or the 'it' that replaces an animal or object name.

- 'I' vs 'Me' – Children will generally use 'I' correctly at 2.5 to 3 years of age. As these pronouns talk about yourself, the best way to model the correct use is to talk about what you are doing around the house.
 - While cleaning, *"I am picking up the toys"*
 - While making lunch, *"I like sandwiches"*
 - When a child fetches their shoes, encourage them to say *"I have my shoes"*
- 'He' vs 'She' – Children will generally use 'he' and 'she' correctly between the ages of 2 to 3 years.
 - Use visual aids such as books, members of the family, toys or even the television to discuss what people are doing. *Example: "He is eating his dinner" or "She is a princess"*.
 - Encourage your child to draw pictures of boys and girls then ask them to describe them. *Example: "He has colourful hair" or "She is a girl because she is wearing a dress" etc.*

- Play games that require the differentiation between boy and girl. This could be shopping with boy and girl toys as customers (*"What does Teddy want today?"... "He wants to buy an apple"*), organising a toys' party and talking about what each toy wants as a gift (*"He wants a ball"*) or dressing toys in boys and girls clothes (*"She needs a skirt"*).

It is important that you stay positive.

This means offering specific praise when your child gets it right (*"Well done, you remembered to say he"*) and offering constructive feedback when they get it wrong (*If the child says "him wants an apple" reply with "Oh, he wants an apple"*).

- 'His' vs 'Her' - Children will generally use 'his' and 'her' correctly at around 4 years of age. 'His' and 'her' are used when talking about objects that belong to other people.
 - Talk to the child about their siblings or mum and dad. *Example: "Tony is eating his dinner and Tina is in her room."*
 - Look through photo albums and talk about how people are related. *Example: "This is Tony, this is his mum."*
 - Male and female toys with accessories are also a great aid – Put all the toys in a pile and ask your child to sort them, talking as he goes. *Example: "This is her bag, this is his motorbike."*