



Language Development – Using Books, Toys, and Board Games

Using Books to Support Language Development

Reading books to your child has many benefits such as stimulating their imagination, expanding their understanding of the world and increasing the bond between you and your child. Reading to your child has also been shown to be one of the most effective ways to build upon their language development in a natural and every day activity.

Reasons to Read to Your Child

Reading to your child does not only benefit his/her language development. It is only one among other very important benefits:

- Increasing their exposure to language. Stories that rhyme are very helpful for teaching speech and language skills and can help children discover a love of language.
- Promotes increased communication between you and your child
- It builds listening skills and promotes longer attention span
- Your child will learn that reading is fun and not a chore
- Books teach your child about relationships, situations, personalities, etc.
- Engages your children's imaginations, stimulating imaginative play and introduces children to things and places they may not have a chance to learn about otherwise, such as oceans or dinosaurs.

Tips About Reading to your Child:

Read to your child every day. Here are some tips to help you. Take your child's age into consideration as you use them.

- Choose books with colourful pictures, and point to the pictures while you read.
- Try to find books with new subjects that you think might interest your child.
- Make your child an active participant in the reading



- Choose books that show lots of action. Ask your child to point to familiar items and make the sounds that go with them. Say "Point to the fire engine" and "What sound does the fire engine make?"
- To help your child understand that letters and words are symbols used to communicate meaning, run your finger under the print as you read to them
- Encourage reading a book multiple times—especially a book your child enjoys. When you read the same book multiple times you can focus on different targets each reading (i.e., discussing new words, ask them questions about the story, discuss emotions, point out different grammar, etc.). If your child really enjoys the story, this will also emphasize that reading is enjoyable.
- Engage in positive conversations about the story. Talk about the characters, setting, problem, solution, different words, and ideas in the story

Using Everyday Toys to Support Language Development

Using everyday activities can be a great way to practice and develop speech, language and literacy skills. These activities can also change a mundane event into a pleasurable one. The child may also not realize that you are practicing speech and language skills because the activity will be fun. A great way to incorporate language into everyday activities is to use the toys your children play with everyday.

Using everyday tasks to promote speech and language is relatively easy, you just have to use your imagination! Here are some examples:

Bath time – Use lots of different types of vocabulary during bathtime, Use *action words* such as *wash, scrub, rinse, clean, brush, dry, splash, sink, float*. Use *object words* such as *soap, towel, water, tap, flannel, bath, sink, body parts*.

Sing songs in the bath. Songs such as 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes', 'Everybody Knows I Love My Toes', 'Row Row Row Your Boat', 'Splish Splash', and 'Rubber Ducky' can be a fun way to build language skills in the tub!

Cleaning the bedroom – Play “I-spy” to practice describing words like: huge, tiny, smelly, clean and prepositions like: under, on top, beside.



People-Watching: Talk about what the people on the street are doing (e.g. walking, working, riding, etc.) to focus on verbs, or name as many different occupations that you can see (driver, policeman, road-worker, cashier, etc).

Below are some fantastic ways to target speech and language skills using the toys/activities you have at home.

Using Board Games and Other Activities to Target Language

Word "Go Fish"

This game helps children develop word (and letter) recognition abilities and is perfect for those learning sight words.

- Make a list of age-appropriate words for your child (or use your child's vocabulary or spelling list from school).
- Using note cards, write each word (use 24 words) on a note card twice: on the left side and the right side.
- Cut the note cards in half, so that the word is on two separate cards. You should have 24 pairs of matching word cards (48 cards total).
- Mix all the cards into a bowl or hat and have each player select 8 cards.
- Play the game using the same rules as "Go Fish," where each player holds his or her cards and attempts to match each card with its pair.
- When a match is made, the player puts the matching cards face up in front of him.
- Play continues until all cards are matched (and all cards in the pile are gone). The winner is the player with the most matches.

Word Scramblers

Word scramblers help children visualize letters that make up words and fine tune their spelling abilities. Most grocery and book stores carry workbooks of word scramble games, and you can also find plenty of Internet sites to create scrambled words for you that you can print or write down for your child. Try www.superkids.com. Here, you can create your own printable scrambled word worksheets (as well as hidden word puzzles) by typing in your own list of words.



If your child enjoys this type of game, there are many options for him or her to choose from, including anagrams, cryptograms, rebus puzzles, crossword puzzles and many others, also available in workbook format at grocery and book stores, or online.

Dictionary Bluff

You can play the board game Balderdash or the homemade version of this game with paper, pens or pencils and a dictionary. This game may be most fun (and appropriate) for older children that are comfortable writing.

- The first player (the "bluffer") selects a word from the dictionary and writes down the definition of the word onto a scrap of paper.
- All other players then write down a definition of their own, which may be either fictitious or an honest attempt at guessing the correct definition.
- The players hand their definitions to the bluffer, who reads all definitions out loud. Players record the answer they believe is correct.
- Once all players have recorded their guess at the correct definition, the bluffer reveals the true answer. Players that guess the correct definition receive two points. Players are awarded one point for each other player who chooses the fake definition they wrote. The bluffer is awarded three points if no one guesses the correct definition.
- Play continues as long as all players wish. When you're ready to quit, add up each player's points. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

Hangman

This game is effective in teaching children to sharpen their word decoding and spelling skills.

- Have one person choose a simple word or phrase.
- Draw blanks at the bottom of the piece of paper for each letter of the word(s) chosen - for example, "Hello" would be " _ _ _ _ _."
- Draw an upside-down "L" on the page.
- Have the guessing player(s) guess one letter at a time. The other player should draw a body part that hangs from the upside-down "L" each time the letter chosen is not part of the word. (First draw a head, then eyes, ears, nose, body, legs and arms.)



- If the drawing of the person is finished before the guessing player guesses (or completely fills in) the word or phrase, the guessing player loses.

SCRABBLE

SCRABBLE, the crossword board game, is a wonderful way for children to become better spellers and enhance their vocabularies. If young children are playing, parents may want to consider sitting in with a dictionary to assist.

Mad Libs

Mad Libs is a word game where players prompt each other for a list of words (adjectives, nouns, verbs and other) to fill in blank spaces within a story. The result is a goofy tale that doesn't make much sense, but is sure funny to read. Your child may never tire of this silly game.

Hedbandz

Hedbandz is a great game that targets categorization and description skills, vocabulary development, and the ability to ask and answer yes/no questions. Also, kids love this one. It must have something to do with wearing a card on your head.

Guess Who?

Guess Who targets the important cognitive skill of deductive reasoning..."figuring out what something is by what it is not." This game also helps kids use descriptive words.

Apple to Apples Junior

Apples to Apples Junior is a great game for adults and kids. It works on vocabulary, comparison, similarities, and differences.

Story Cubes



Story Cubes is a wonderful and fun way to practice oral story telling skills and narrative structure. Also helps with sequencing.

Match It

The Match It puzzles target a variety of language skills ranging from early developing sequencing abilities to letter recognition!

ThumBall/Conversation Ball

This is a group game that works on asking and answering WH questions. This is a ball (volleyball/beach ball/etc.) with questions written all over it. Catch the ball, locate your right thumb the nearest question or topic and discuss what is written there. It may prompt the child to name a favorite movie or describe a perfect vacation. Give your own answer and/or ask someone in the group a question for the best interactive learning and fun.

Would You Rather

Would You Rather is the zany game of strange dilemmas and difficult choices. Discuss, debate and laugh while you play this game. This game opens up conversation topics, new vocabulary, turn-taking, etc. in a fun way.

Things in a Box

The Game of THINGS... is a funny game that presents players with topics like "THINGS... that would make a good potato chip flavor." , "THINGS... you wouldn't do for a million dollars." or "THINGS... you shouldn't keep in your pocket." and allows each player to say whatever comes to mind. Pick a topic, get everyone to write a response, read them out loud and then guess who said what. This game helps students develop oral and written expression, develop drawing skills, and learn to work cooperatively * see attached sheet for different ways to play this game

Scattergories



Scattergories is designed for adolescents and adults, and promotes vocabulary, word retrieval, and organizational skills. For example, name something you can find at a beach that starts with the letter /s/, such as “swimming suit.” If your child is having word retrieval difficulties, use strategies such as identifying the category/function, describing what it looks like, or drawing a picture.

Cariboo

Cariboo is a creative game made by Cranium, promotes turn-taking, requesting, and conceptual skills. Personal pronouns can be targeted by asking, “Whose turn is it?” while requesting skills can be targeted by having your child ask for game materials such as a card or key. After requesting a playing card, you and the child can discuss colors, shapes, letters, and numbers (for example, “Wow, this door has 4 yellow butterflies on it!”). Cariboo can be played individually, but it is highly recommended to play it with friends!