

Language

Language is divided into two components – listening and speaking. Receptive language is your child’s ability to listen and understand what is being said. Expressive language is your child’s ability to speak or communicate with others. Your child learns about language through his experiences, conversations, and in his play and social interactions. Language development and literacy development go hand in hand. Children with strong oral language skills usually develop strong reading and writing skills, too.

Vocabulary development, the learning of new words, is an important aspect of language development. You can build vocabulary by reading aloud to your child and asking open-ended questions that require more thought, not just one-word responses or answering only “yes or no.” Expand your child’s language by rephrasing or adding new words. This is known as “recasting.” Talk about events that may have occurred yesterday or will happen tomorrow and explain things more in detail. Use pretend talk and retell stories. This focuses on imagination and past experiences. Young children love to hear stories especially about themselves or when you were a child. Sing songs, recite poems, read nursery rhymes, and just talk to your child about anything you are engaged in doing at any specific time. It can be when you are folding socks, fixing dinner, taking a bath, playing with his toys, or taking a nature walk. The possibilities are endless. Your child understands more sophisticated words than he is able to use when communicating and speaking.

To help your child develop good communication skills, you need to be a really good listener! Get down on your child’s level, give eye contact, and concentrate on what your child is saying. It is normal for young children to not have fluent speech. Their thoughts and ideas are coming faster than they can often retrieve the necessary words to speak. Just wait patiently for your child to find the words on his own. When your child is finished, summarize or expand on his sentences and ideas. You will be helping your child to develop his language skills and you are acknowledging that what he has to say is important.

