

PARENT TRAINING GUIDE



Support your child's speech and
language development.



BY LISA CYTRYNBAUM

Dear Parent,

This guide has been created to share tips on how you can facilitate your preschooler's speech and language learning by involving him in meaningful and positive interactions throughout your day, Using these techniques will reassure your child that you are paying attention, listening and trying to understand him.

Reciprocal communication is at the root of the nurturing relationship between you and your child, My goal is to help you leverage your relationship to optimize speech and language stimulation. This guide will help you provide your preschooler with early opportunities to participate in meaningful and reciprocal communications, and in doing so help him develop successful lifelong communication skills.

Lisa Cytrynbaum

STEP ONE: Follow your child's lead.

Notice what he is paying attention to and talk about it. This step alone takes the pressure off you. Slow down, breathe and take the back seat. And because he will devote more attention to what he is interested in, he will be more receptive to sounds and words you link to that object/activity. Bonus... Showing an interest in what he is interested in makes him feel important.

- Imitate your child's sounds, actions and words.
- Interpret your child's sounds, gestures and words.
- Offer a short comment / observation about what he is interested in.

STEP TWO: Create room for your child to take a turn (speaking).

This may look like you saying nothing for what feels like a long time. For some parents this can be very uncomfortable because they instinctively want to fill in the quiet spaces.

- Stop talking!
- Get face to face and lean in.
- Look at your child expectantly (as if you expect her to take a turn) and wait.

STEP THREE: Tempt (motivate) your child to ask for something.

A young child will use her skills when she really wants something. Even though you think you know what she wants, avoid giving it to her right away. Instead, motivate her to communicate her desire.

- Offer 2 choices (include what you think she wants).
- Put desired items in view but out of reach (a high shelf).
- Pause a familiar favorite activity (a song, an outdoor swing) thus providing an opportunity for her to communicate her desire to continue.
- Omit a step in a routine (put her in the tub, but don't turn on the water)

STEP FOUR: Respond to any communication attempt by your child.

Communication is a reciprocal activity, with both listening and speaking. Your response is considered a reward and will encourage more communication.

- It's okay If you didn't understand him, guess.
- Reword his message... "Do you mean...?"
- One phrase may mean many different things: "*Mommy cake*" *could mean*: "Mommy baked a cake", "Mommy fed me cake", "Mommy I want cake", "It's mommy's birthday". Confirm what you think he means, "Yes, mommy baked a cake."

STEP FIVE: Expand his message by adding words.

Model language just one step beyond your child's. If he's using single words, model two word combinations. It's important that children learn to use a variety of word combinations Build on his words in different ways.

- Describe - *Big bubble*
- Possessor - *My bubble*
- More - *More bubble*
- Finish - *All done bubble*
- Negative - *No bubble*
- Location - *Bubble up*
- Action - *Blow bubble*
- Person - *Mama blow*

STEP SIX: Ask questions with care.

First get clear yourself.

Do you have an *Instruction* or a *Question* for your child?

- Keep questions to a minimum.
- Ask *what, who, where* (rather than *why or how*).
- Avoid testing questions, rhetorical questions, difficult questions, and complex questions (if... then).
- Revise your questions into comments.
- Sometimes parents ask questions when a direction or comment would have been clearer.

Instead of "Should we...?" say "Let's....".
Instead of "Can you...?" say "Go get it.".
Instead of "That's silly, isn't it?" say "Silly cat".

STEP SEVEN: Keep communication FUN.

Any activities that allow you to connect and have fun together will support language learning. Asking your child to say a word or name something can take the joy out of your connection. Sing songs and recite nursery rhymes. Rhythm and repetition intrigue young children, and help with development of language skills.

- Use FUN sounds and words.
- Join in pretend play.
- Use routines, using the same words each time, so it is familiar.

Each of these techniques, to support speech and language development, exists within healthy adult interactions. Intuitively we know that communication is at the root of connection. When connecting with others, we pay attention to them and their interests. We are curious, we ask questions, we build on their messages and ideas, we respond to each other and we take turns. Holding young children witness to and as active participants in this style of engagement, strengthens a foundation on which to build speech-language skills and meaningful connections.



I am a certified and registered Speech-Language Pathologist. I received my Master of Health Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Toronto in 1993. I have been supporting the speech and language skills of children and adults for over 20 years.

The ability to communicate is by far our most powerful tool.

Good communication skills play a key role in developing and sustaining relationships throughout life. This is why I am passionate about teaching parents of young children how to enhance their child's speech and language environment and support strong communication skills.

If you have any questions, or would like to connect, please reach out.

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