

Building Your Child's Language Skills

Things to Think About

Children start to build language skills during the first years of life. In fact, children who do not get a good start have a lot of trouble catching up later. Children are especially learning language rapidly during the period of sixteen to thirty months. By 3 years of age, most children are able to speak in complex sentences. Children learn language in this order:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading

How Can You Help?

As your child's first teacher, you should let your child hear lots of sounds and words. With an infant, you can begin by repeating sounds the baby makes. As your child begins to say a few words, respond and build upon what is said. Enjoy talking, singing, and reading with your child!

Help with Listening:

- Play listening games like *Simon Says*.
- Tell stories (make believe, stories about you growing up, family memories).
- Sing to – and with – your child. Make up songs, using catchy words and rhymes.

Help with Speaking:

- Get down on eye level with your child. Respond to what your child is saying and add more words and ideas.
Example: Your child says, "Ball." You say, "Yes it is a big blue ball!"
- Interact and talk with your child – about what you are doing, seeing, feeling, and thinking.
- Play word games (naming things, rhyming, and making up silly words).
- Pretend with your child. Use dress up, role play, and puppets.

Help with Reading:

- Read or look at a book with your child daily.

- Show your child that words are everywhere. Look at signs, cereal boxes, and magazines.

- Visit the library for books, tapes, and CDs.

Help your child have fun learning language!