



## Tip sheet: 10 things to say and do to help your child talk

Try these ideas on how to interact with your child to encourage speech. They're for kids who are starting to talk. They were developed by Stacey Kay, speech-language pathologist, Holland Bloorview nursery schools: 416-425-6220, ext. 3001.

### 1. Follow your child's lead

- Pick up on your child's interests and go where your child wants to go.
- Play with things or activities your child is interested in.

### 2. Watch and listen

- Look carefully at your child to figure out what your child wants or needs.
- Listen. If you're talking, you can't listen.
- Your child may try to tell you something by using eye gaze, reaching, pointing or using signs, pictures, sounds and words.

### 3. Get down to your child's level

- Lie down on the floor if your child is lying on the floor.
- Kneel down to remain face to face and at your child's eye level.

### 4. Repeat and imitate your child's words, sounds and action

- This will tell your child that you're paying attention to him.
- Kids learn to copy actions first. Copying is a great skill to work on because it involves cooperation and turn-taking which is used in play.

### 5. Talk to your child

- Describe things in your child's environment: "See ball."
- Describe what's happening – "Mommy cooking"; "Thomas crying."
- Describe what you or your child is doing – "Change diaper."



**6. Use short simple sentences**

- Try to speak in phrases that have one more word than your child is using.
- If your child is speaking in single words (e.g. "Cookie"), speak to him in two word sentences (e.g. "Eat cookie."). This helps your child focus on the important words. He will be more likely to understand the message and imitate it.
- Speak slowly and clearly.

**7. Repeat key word**

- Stress important words and say them many times.
- Use the same words each time to represent an object or activity (e.g. "I see **dog**. Big **dog**. **Dog** says woof woof.")
- Set up activities so there are many chances to practice a word in the same activity (e.g. if the word is 'on,' say 'on' every time you put on a piece of clothing) or use it in different activities (e.g. 'Lights on').

**8. Exaggerate your hand gestures and facial expression**

- Be enthusiastic, silly and engaging.
- Exaggerate your tone of voice.

**9. Model and expand your child's word attempt**

- Child: "Cah."
- Adult: "Car." (model)
- Adult: "I see a car." (expand)

**10. Don't test your child**

- Don't say "What is this?"
- Don't tell your child what to say (e.g. "Say cat" or "Say cookie."). This places a lot of stress on your child. Just model what you see (e.g. "Apple" or "See cat.").

