



**Communication** skills relate to your child's ability to both ***understand and use language.***

**Communication skills are usually described in two categories:**

***Receptive skills:***

- Listening and understanding
- Understanding pictures and objects
- Following directions

***Expressive skills:***

- Letting others know information
- Pointing, gesturing, babbling, talking
- Using words and vocabulary

## Tips for Communicating and Interacting with your Child

### Support your child in making requests:

- Requesting could be by gesture, pointing, sign, picture or verbal. Acknowledge attempts.
- Offer things, like a snack, bit by bit, so your child will have to make multiple requests.
- When playing a physical game like swinging, your child can learn how he or she can start the game by saying "go" after you say "ready, set..."

### Support your child in learning how to refuse or protest:

- To help your child tell you "no," "enough," "all done," or "stop" offer him or her least favorite things.
- Continue an activity until your child wants to stop. Provide ways for him or her to end the activity by showing or gesturing or verbalizing.

### Support your child in answering questions:

- Change the way you ask questions. When you ask your child a basic yes or no question, you might limit their response to you. Instead of asking if he or she wants to play with blocks, ask specifically "What do you want to play next?"
- When you need to ask your child a question, try to leave the question open ended to encourage a longer response.
- Choices:** Making choices is an important language and communication skill. If your child has difficulty answering questions or making requests, giving him or her choices is a good way to improve these skills.

## ***IMPORTANT:***

To help your child develop communication and language skills:  
Take time to ***TALK AND LISTEN.***



# Tips for Encouraging Your Child's Communication and Language

## Making the Most of Everyday Routines

Routines are important for providing your child with structure and can help with the development of independence. Routines are an important part of young children's school day so teaching routines at home will help in getting your child ready to start school. Routines include activities that your child does in almost the same way on a regular basis. Some examples are: toileting, washing hands, getting dressed, brushing teeth, putting away toys, helping with tasks such as clearing off the table.

Communication during routines – The most important thing you can do while your child is engaging in routines is talk to him or her. Talk; ask questions, comment about what your child is doing.

## Talking to your child during routines helps language development:

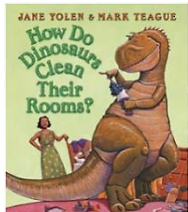
- How words are organized: before, after, then
- Vocabulary associated with routines
- How to respond and/or initiate conversation in social routines

## Some things you can do:

- Label the items associated with routines, what you are giving them, what they need and want.
- Break routines into small parts so that your child hears and uses associated words frequently and gets more practice.
- Label what your child is interested in at the moment. Label what you are doing so that your child associates your action with his or her request or interest.
- Use visuals, objects, drawings, photos to help your child associate the words used with the routine to actions and items.

## Reading is an Important Routine

Reading to your child is invaluable for his or her development. As a routine that is part of your family's daily schedule, it serves to build relationships, and helps your child learn to pay attention and learn to listen. Reading can be a relaxing bedtime routine that helps your child end a busy day in a positive and nurturing way.



Public libraries are good resources for books and you are likely to find many books about routines. You can use these books to follow up on some of the words and concepts you have talked about during your daily routines with your child.

When you are reading books about routines, ask questions about the things you have done. Example: "Dinosaur is cleaning his room. Do you remember when we cleaned your room? What did we do?"

Example: "Froggy got dressed in his red cap. Do you have a red cap?"



## Make Language Fun

### Before and After Photos

Take photos of an area before cleaning and after cleaning. Talk about the pictures, label the objects and actions. Key question: "How is it different?"

Take photos of your child doing a task such as brushing teeth. Take a photo of each step. Talk about the pictures, label the actions. Key questions: "What did you do first – next – last?"

### Talk About Sorting



Help your child sort paper plates, cups, plastic utensils by color or size. Talk about the shapes, colors, uses of them as you are sorting. Key questions: "What foods are the same colors as these?" "What foods do you like?" Surprise your child with a special treat or picnic using the things you have sorted. Talk and enjoy!

More information about routines:

- [Power of Using Everyday Routines](#)
- [Self-help and Chores](#)



## ***Making the Most of Playing with Your Child***

Communication during play time – The most important thing you can do while your child is engaging in play is talk to him or her. Talk; ask questions, comment about what your child is doing.

### ***Talking to your child during play helps language development:***

- How to respond and/or initiate conversation in social situations – using social phrases such as “my turn”, “your turn”, “let’s play something different”, “we can share”.
- Encourage communication by encouraging engagement - Talk to your child during play time. Play with him or her and show your interest and enjoyment of the play. Let your child know communication is important.
- Comment, ask to take turns, encourage a “play date” with a peer buddy who will interact.
- Engage in simple games which don’t require a long time to play. Include games which accept gestures, motions, sounds or those in which visual symbols are involved.

### ***Some things you can do:***

- Label the items and toys during play, what you are giving them, what they need and want.
- Label what your child is interested in at the moment. Label what you are doing so that your child associates your action with his or her interests and activities.
- Encourage pretend play and talk to your child while you are performing actions of pretend play, for example pretending to cook or drive. Relate the pretend actions to real-life actions.



### ***Play is Important for Development of Language Concepts***

Use words that describe positions and motions when you play with your child. Examples include: in, out, on, under, around. Say the words while making the motions and ask your child to put toys in certain places, for example “put the red block on the blue one.”

Teach your child to anticipate or predict events while playing. For example, “this stack is getting tall, how many can we stack before it all falls down?”

Remember that children like active play. Outside play can also be a good time to talk about what you are doing. It is also a good time to encourage imitation movements and sounds. Act out stories that you have read that include moving like an airplane or hopping like a bunny. Sand-play is a good way to include actions and words such as “fill it up” and “dump it out.”

Use times when your child is interested and engaged to talk about relationships between what they are doing to words and language concepts.



### ***Make Language Fun***

#### ***Teach Imitation***

Imitation is an important skill for future learning. Make up fun games of imitation –  
“Do What I Do”  
“Watch and Do”  
“Walk Like a Duck”  
(change up the animals)

Include making sounds in your imitation games –  
“Listen and Sound Like ...”  
“Sound Like a Dog”  
(change up the animals)

#### ***Play with Play Dough***



Play dough is an enjoyable activity that can be used to develop language concepts. Talk about colors, shapes, and motions (roll the dough, pound on the dough). Shape the dough into big and little sized shapes. Use the dough to help your child make choices of which color and to take turns with you in using colors and tools.  
Talk and enjoy!

## References and Resources

[Family Involvement Section of TATS Website](#) – Includes “TATS Talks” about topics such as child development, exceptional student services, importance of pre-k, and tips for family engagement.

[Examples of Home Literacy Materials from Center for Early Literacy](#)

[Helping Toddlers Expand Their Language](#) – from Child Mind Institute



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