



Toronto Public Health
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COMMENT...

avoid asking questions

We often ask too many questions and this stops conversation instead of keeping it going. Try to:

- Ask fewer questions
- Turn a question into a comment
 - instead of asking a question, talk about what you or your child is doing ...
 - Instead of asking: "Is this car going up?"
You could say: "Car goes up."
- **Label** new words instead of testing whether your child knows the word ...
 - Instead of asking: "What's that?" or "Say apple?"
You could say: "Look, apple, yummy apple."
- Ask questions when you really need to find out information (e.g., "Where are mommy's keys?")
- Using too many questions provides fewer opportunities for your child to imitate words

Avoid doing this:



Do this instead:



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FACE *to* FACE



Being face to face helps your child ...

- Know that you are paying attention and are interested in what he/she has to “say”
- Establish and maintain eye contact, an important part of communication
- Learn to focus on the same thing as you
- See how you say different sounds and words

Being face to face helps you ...

- Notice what your child is looking at, which is a clue to what they are interested in
- Observe your child’s facial expressions – so that you know when to stop, when to change activities, and when to keep playing

How do I get face to face?

- Get down to your child’s physical level (e.g., sitting on small chairs, lying on the floor, raising your child up, etc.)
- Move as your child moves to maintain face to face contact
- Hold motivating objects (i.e., favourite toys/food) beside your cheek to encourage your child to look at your eyes and mouth



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WAITING

- Wait for your child to comment, react, or ask for more with a gesture or a word
- If your child does not say anything after you have waited five to ten seconds, model the words that he/she should have said. For example:

Parent: “We are going to put the block ____.”

Parent waits five to ten seconds for child to fill in the word “on”.

Child: Does not respond.

Parent: “**On.** Put block **on.**”

Parent gives child block to put on top of the block tower.

- Be available to help your child in situations, but **wait** for your child to request for “help” by making eye contact, bringing the object to you, vocalizing, or saying “help”



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TURN TAKING

Turn taking is an important skill for your child to learn. At first, children learn to take turns in play. Later, children understand how to take turns “talking” in interactions. Turn taking helps increase a child’s attention span, and promotes eye contact.

Take turns by:

- Setting a limited number of turns that you expect your child to take at first (e.g., place two blocks on the tower before he/she leaves)
- Labelling turns from your child’s perspective, (e.g., “My turn” and “Mommy’s turn.”)
- Using phrases such as, “One more block” and “Blocks are all done.”
- Increasing the number of turns you expect your child to take, based on how he/she is responding to the activity
- Taking your turn quickly to keep your child’s interest

Activity Examples for turn taking:

Activity	Making It Interactive	Using Words to Label
ball	Play catch, roll ball back and forth, throw ball in a box	ball, throw, in, bounce, catch
blocks	Build a tower together, take blocks off one at a time	block, on, off, fall down
puzzle	Put together a puzzle one piece at a time	animal/object names on puzzle piece, more, put in, take out



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Use simple **LANGUAGE**

Use short sentences when talking to your child (i.e., one to three words at most). Always stay **one step above** your child's current level of communication. For example:

You offer your child juice. Instead of asking, "Do you want to have a glass of juice?" try the following:

If your child ...	You should ...	Example
Uses no words	Use single words	"Juice?"
Uses single words	Use two-word combinations	"Want juice?"
Uses two-word combinations	Use three-word combinations	"Want some juice?"



- This strategy can be used to help your child **understand** what you say
- Using short phrases helps your child to pick out the important words from the sentence
- If your child already has a good understanding of language, using short sentences will make it easier for your child to copy what you are saying



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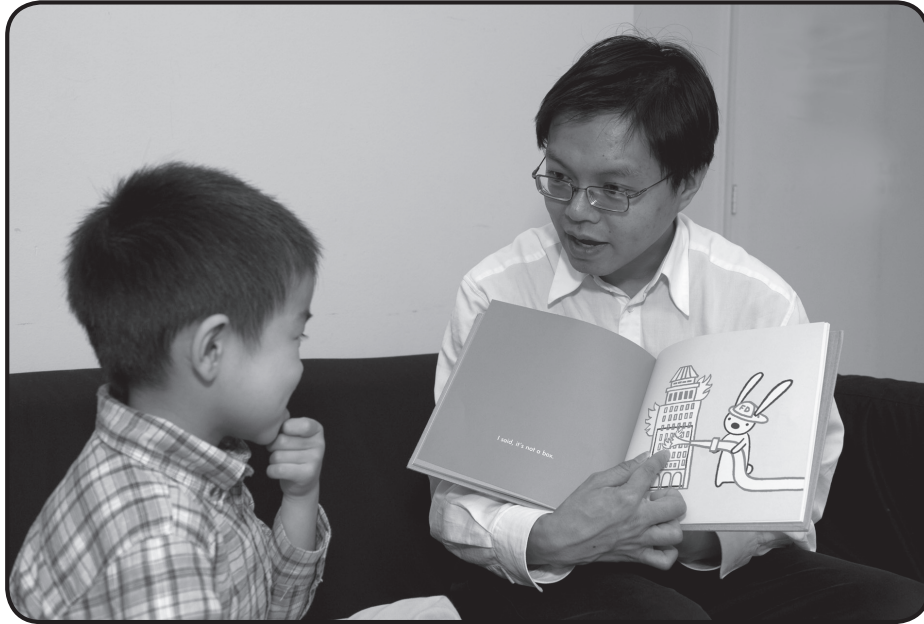
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SHARING *a* BOOK



When sharing a book:

- Allow your child to choose the book
- Give your child as much time as he/she needs to look at the pictures
- Join in with sounds, actions, or words

Some suggestions when reading a book:

- Sit face to face with your child with the book facing toward him/her
- Use books with lots of pictures
- Label the pictures (e.g., “I see a ball.” Pause and wait for your child to take their turn)
- Keep the story simple, make up the words to the story, or change them
- Use an excited voice, make sounds and special voices that go with the story
- Leave out familiar words or parts of the story for your child to fill in (e.g., “Once there was a bear who loved ____.”)
- Talk about the cause of events (Why? How come?)
- Enjoy and share that special joy of stories with your child



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SAY *what you think* *your* **CHILD MEANS**

- If your child does not use words, or you don't understand what was said, **say it as your child would if he/she could**
- Give your child a good, clear model of how the words should sound, without calling attention to the error. For example:

Child: "ba"

Parent: "**Bird**, yes there's the **bird!**"

- Give your child the words for sounds or gestures that he/she uses. For example:

Child: Reaches for juice and grunts "ah-ah"

Parent: Interprets that child wants juice and says, "Juice. Daddy Juice." Parent then pours child juice.

Child: Screams and begins to cry when parent presents book at bed time.

Parent: Interprets that child does not want to read book and say, "No, no book!"

Parent offers child a different book to read or another night time activity.



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REPEAT, *repeat*, REPEAT

Repeat important words several times in many different situations:

For example,

See how many times you can repeat the word “bubbles” in an activity by combining it with other words:

“Bubbles”

“Open bubbles”

“Blow bubbles”

“Pop bubbles”

“Close bubbles”

“Bubbles”

“More bubbles”

* bubble wands can be a choking hazard for children; ensure that you are holding the wand at all times

- Wait to give your child a chance to react or respond
- Some children need to hear a word many times before they can understand it and try to say it



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Give a reason to **COMMUNICATE AND WAIT**

These strategies remove the ability to only answer “yes” or “no” and encourages your child to use the specific name of the object. The strategies also provide a chance for your child to comment or react.

Offer desired objects bit by bit ...

- This strategy works well at snack time: pour only a little juice or milk into your child’s cup, so that he/she has to ask you for **more** several times during snack time
- Be the “keeper” of all of the pieces
- When playing with toys that have multiple pieces (e.g., puzzle, blocks, etc.), keep all of the pieces in a bag or container, encouraging your child to request one piece during each turn

Offer a choice ...

- Show and name each choice item while asking “Do you want **car** or **block**?”
- Wait for your child to “tell” you what he/she wants (e.g., by looking, reaching, pointing, vocalizing, or using words)
- Give only the object that was asked for
- Label the item as you hand it to your child (e.g., “Block, you want block.”)

Create a silly or unusual situation ...

- Do something your child would not expect and wait for a reaction

Examples of silly situations:

- put your child’s pajama pants on his/her head
- put both of your child’s socks on the same foot
- start happily bathing your child in a bathtub that has no water in it
- start to pour your child’s juice but “forget” the cup



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LABELLING

Labelling (or naming) is a way for you to help your child learn new words.

Labelling is useful because it:

- Shows your child that you are responding to his/her focus of interest
- Teaches your child that you can use a word instead of a gesture

Here are some suggestions for things to talk about:

Tell your child names of **people** and **objects** that he/she is interested in:

ball	cookie
juice	daddy
doggy	swing

Talk about what your child is doing:

push	open
walk	give
splash	eat

Talk about where the objects and people are:

in	up
out	on

Use words that are useful (functional) for your child in everyday situations:

Focus on using:	Instead of using:
help	triangle
more	please
mine	blue
eat	good boy/girl



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JOIN *in* & PLAY

By joining in and playing together, you create many opportunities for your child to learn more language and to practice talking with you.

Instead of ...

Insisting that your child play with a toy of your choice ...



Watching your child play from the sidelines ...



Telling your child what to do with the toys ...



Feeling reserved and self-conscious when playing with your child ...



Try to ...

Watch to see what toys your child finds interesting, and then play along.

Get your own toy and copy what your child is doing with that toy (if appropriate).

Get your own toy and show him/her how to play.

Pretend play is important for language development, so model simple pretend actions (e.g., feeding, combing hair, sleeping, dressing, washing, etc.) for your child.

Forget about how you look and be playful – you are the best toy in the house! You will get your child's attention by using an excited voice, fun words (e.g., "oops", "weee!", "crash") and lots of gestures/facial expressions.



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IMITATING

Imitation will motivate and encourage your child to interact with you. Imitation shows your child that you are interested in what he/she is doing, and also encourages him/her to imitate you back.

Some suggestions for imitating your child are:

- follow your child's lead by imitating his/her body movements and facial expressions
- try imitating with another toy rather than expecting your child to share his/her toy

Imitate what your child says and make corrections. For example:

Child: "Ded car."

Parent: "Yes, red car."

Imitate and add one or two more words. For example:

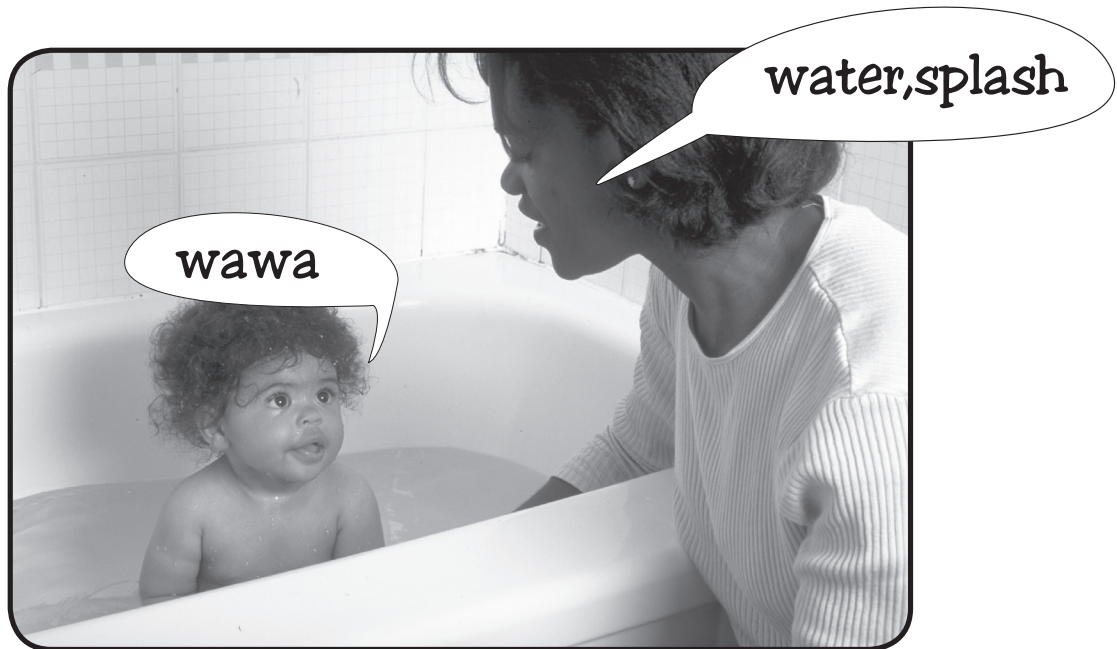
Child: "Put baby."

Parent: "Put baby on table."

Add new ideas to what your child says. For example:

Child: "Doggie!"

Parent: "Doggie says woof, woof!"



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FOLLOW *your* *child's* **LEAD**



Why follow your child's lead?

- When you talk about what your child is interested in, he/she has an easier time learning language
- By following your child's lead, it shows your child that you are interested in what he/she is doing

How to follow your child's lead ...

- Watch to see what your child is interested in
- Wait to give your child a chance to choose the toy or activity
- Join in and talk about what you and your child are doing

When not to follow your child's lead ...

- Your child is doing something you don't want him/her to do (e.g., throwing a toy, biting)
- Your child has a short attention span



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Daily ROUTINES

- Take advantage of daily routines and **add** language

This is a good opportunity to:

- label important actions and objects
- repeat key words
- give your child a reason to communicate
- take turns together
- Set up: label the routine (e.g., “getting dressed”)
Mark each step, for example, “shirt on”, “pants on”, “socks on”
- Hold up pants and **wait** for your child to say or do something
- Take turns choosing what to put on next
- Label the end of a routine (e.g., “all finished”)
- Other examples of daily routines:
 - bath time
 - meal time
 - bed time
 - play time



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