




# 50+ ACTIVITIES ANY PARENT CAN DO AT HOME TO ENCOURAGE SPEECH & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Prelinguistic Skills  
Speech Sounds  
Understanding of Language  
Use of Language  
Preliteracy Skills  
Social Skills



# ENCOURAGING PRELINGUISTIC SKILLS (BEFORE WORDS)

- **Imitation Games:** Copy your child's sounds and actions, and encourage them to copy yours (clapping hands, waving). How-to: Make it a back-and-forth interaction. Targeted skills: Imitation, turn-taking.
- **Using Mirrors:** Practice making different sounds in front of a mirror so your child can see how their mouth moves. How-to: Describe the mouth movements (e.g., "See how your lips go together for 'm'"). Targeted skills: Visual feedback for articulation.
- **Joint Attention Activities:** Focus on the same object or activity together, pointing and commenting ("Look at the doggy!"). How-to: Follow your child's lead and comment on what interests them. Targeted skills: Shared focus, early communication.
- **Pointing and Gesturing:** Encourage your child to point to things they want or are interested in. Use gestures along with your words. How-to: Model pointing and gesturing. Targeted skills: Non-verbal communication, expressing needs.
- **Turn-Taking Games:** Play simple games with clear turns (rolling a ball back and forth, stacking blocks). How-to: Verbalize whose turn it is. Targeted skills: Understanding turn-taking, social interaction.
- **Vocalizations and Babbling:** Respond positively to your child's babbles and vocalizations, imitating their sounds and expanding on them. How-to: Have "conversations" using sounds. Targeted skills: Vocal exploration, early sound production.
- **Playing with Wind Instruments (Simple):** Blow bubbles, whistles, or party blowers. How-to: Encourage your child to imitate the blowing action, which can help with oral motor skills needed for certain sounds. Targeted skills: Oral motor control, breath control.
- **Peek-a-Boo:** Play peek-a-boo to encourage anticipation and interaction. How-to: Use your hands or a blanket to hide your face and then reappear, saying "Boo!". Targeted skills: Object permanence, anticipation, vocalizations.
- **Simple Action Songs with Gestures:** Sing songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or "Wheels on the Bus" and use the corresponding gestures. Encourage your child to imitate the gestures. How-to: Make the gestures clear and repetitive. Targeted skills: Gesture imitation, connecting actions with words.
- **Cause and Effect Toys:** Play with toys that have a clear cause and effect (e.g., pushing a button to make a sound, stacking blocks that can be knocked down). How-to: Verbalize the cause and effect ("I push the button, it makes music!"). Targeted skills: Understanding cause and effect, intentional communication.

# ENCOURAGING SPEECH SOUNDS (ARTICULATION)

- **Animal Sounds:** Make animal sounds together ("Moo," "Baa," "Woof"). How-to: Imitate the sounds and encourage your child to copy you. Targeted skills: Early sound production, imitation.
- **Vehicle Noises:** Play with toy cars, trucks, and airplanes, making their associated sounds ("Vroom," "Beep," "Whoosh"). How-to: Emphasize the initial sounds of the words. Targeted skills: Sound imitation, associating sounds with objects.
- **Sound Scavenger Hunt:** Look for things around the house or park that make specific sounds (e.g., a clock that "ticks," a bird that "tweets"). How-to: Point out the sound source and say the sound clearly. Targeted skills: Sound identification, linking sounds to the environment.
- **Silly Sounds Game:** Take turns making funny sounds with your mouths, like lip pops, tongue clicks, and raspberries. How-to: Encourage experimentation and imitation. Targeted skills: Oral motor skills, sound exploration.
- **Rhyming Games:** Say simple rhyming words and encourage your child to finish the rhyme (e.g., "Cat, hat, \_\_\_\_"). How-to: Emphasize the ending sounds of words. Targeted skills: Phonological awareness, sound patterns.
- **Singing Songs:** Sing simple songs with repetitive sounds and words (e.g., "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," "Old MacDonald Had a Farm"). How-to: Sing slowly and clearly, encouraging your child to sing along. Targeted skills: Rhythm, sound imitation, memory.
- **Sound Matching:** (For kids 3+ years old) Use picture cards of objects and say their names, focusing on the initial sound. Ask your child to find another picture that starts with the same sound. How-to: Clearly articulate the initial sounds. Targeted skills: Phonological awareness, sound discrimination.
- **"I Spy" with Sounds:** "I spy with my little ear something that goes 'meow!'" How-to: Focus on identifying objects by their sounds. Targeted skills: Auditory attention, sound-object association.
- **Reading Rhyming Books:** Choose books with lots of rhymes and emphasize the rhyming words as you read. How-to: Point to the rhyming words and say them with emphasis. Targeted skills: Phonological awareness, exposure to sound patterns.
- **Echo Game:** Say a simple word or sound, and have your child repeat it exactly. How-to: Start with single sounds and progress to short words. Targeted skills: Auditory processing, sound imitation.

# ENCOURAGING RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE (UNDERSTANDING)

- **"Where's the...?" Game:** Ask your child to point to familiar objects ("Where's the ball?").  
How-to: Start with one object and gradually increase the number of choices. Targeted skills: Object identification, following simple directions.
- **Body Part Identification:** Name body parts and ask your child to point to them ("Show me your nose").  
How-to: Make it a fun game with songs like "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes."  
Targeted skills: Body part vocabulary, following directions.
- **Following One-Step Directions:** Give simple instructions ("Give me the cup").  
How-to: Use clear and concise language. Targeted skills: Understanding simple commands.
- **Following Two-Step Directions:** Give slightly more complex instructions ("Pick up the toy and put it in the box").  
How-to: Ensure your child understands the first step before adding the second. Targeted skills: Understanding multi-step commands, sequencing.
- **Picture Identification:** Show pictures of familiar objects or actions and ask "What's this?" or "What's happening?".  
How-to: Use clear and colorful pictures. Targeted skills: Vocabulary understanding, understanding actions.
- **Pointing to Pictures When Named:** Say the name of an object or action, and ask your child to point to the corresponding picture.  
How-to: Ensure the pictures are distinct. Targeted skills: Vocabulary comprehension, auditory-visual association.
- **"Yes/No" Questions:** Ask simple "yes/no" questions related to the immediate environment ("Is this a ball?").  
How-to: Encourage verbal or non-verbal responses (nodding, shaking head). Targeted skills: Understanding basic concepts, responding to questions.
- **Categorization:** Group objects together and name the category ("These are all fruits").  
Then ask your child to find another fruit. How-to: Start with obvious categories. Targeted skills: Understanding categories, vocabulary.
- **Spatial Concepts:** Use prepositions while playing ("Put the toy in the box," "The ball is under the chair").  
How-to: Act out the prepositions. Targeted skills: Understanding spatial relationships.
- **Story Comprehension:** Read simple stories and ask basic questions about what happened ("Who went to the park?").  
How-to: Start with short and repetitive stories. Targeted skills: Listening comprehension, recalling information.

# ENCOURAGING EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE (TALKING)

- **Labeling Objects:** Name objects around the house and encourage your child to repeat the names. How-to: Point to the object as you say its name. Targeted skills: Vocabulary development, word imitation.
- **Asking "What's This?":** Point to objects and ask your child "What's this?". How-to: Be patient and provide the answer if needed, encouraging repetition. Targeted skills: Object naming, initiating communication.
- **Using Simple Phrases:** Model and encourage the use of two-word phrases ("More juice," "Big ball"). How-to: Expand on your child's single words. Targeted skills: Combining words, early sentence structure.
- **Requesting:** Encourage your child to ask for what they want using words or signs ("Want juice," pointing and saying "up"). How-to: Model the desired phrase. Targeted skills: Communicating needs, using language for a purpose.
- **Describing:** Encourage your child to describe objects using simple adjectives ("Big ball," "Red car"). How-to: Ask questions like "Tell me about the ball." Targeted skills: Expanding vocabulary, using descriptive words.
- **Answering "Wh" Questions:** Ask simple "who," "what," and "where" questions ("Who is that?", "What are you doing?", "Where is your shoe?"). How-to: Start with questions about the immediate environment. Targeted skills: Providing information, understanding question words.
- **Narrating Actions:** Talk about what you are doing ("Mommy is cooking"). Encourage your child to narrate their own actions ("I am building"). How-to: Model simple sentences. Targeted skills: Using verbs, forming simple sentences.
- **Pretend Play with Talking:** Engage in pretend play scenarios (e.g., playing house, doctor) and encourage your child to use language to act out roles and scenarios. How-to: Model language appropriate for the situation. Targeted skills: Imaginative play, social communication, using language in context.
- **Finishing Sentences:** Start a simple sentence and encourage your child to finish it ("I see a \_\_\_\_"). How-to: Use repetitive sentence structures. Targeted skills: Sentence completion, anticipation.
- **Telling Simple Stories:** Encourage your child to tell simple stories about their day or experiences, even if it's just a few words or phrases. How-to: Provide prompts and support. Targeted skills: Sequencing events, narrative skills.
- **"Would You Rather?" Questions (Simple):** Ask simple "would you rather" questions to encourage choices and explanations ("Would you rather have a cookie or a cracker? Why?"). How-to: Encourage them to verbalize their reasoning. Targeted skills: Expressing preferences, providing reasons.

# ENCOURAGING EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

- **Looking at Books Together:** Make reading a regular and enjoyable activity. How-to: Point to pictures, name them, and talk about the story. Targeted skills: Book awareness, vocabulary development.
- **Pointing to Pictures and Words:** As you read, point to the pictures and then to the words. How-to: Help your child understand that print carries meaning. Targeted skills: Print awareness, visual tracking.
- **Singing the Alphabet Song:** Sing the alphabet song together and point to the letters if you have an alphabet book or blocks. How-to: Make it interactive and fun. Targeted skills: Letter recognition (auditory and visual).
- **Playing with Alphabet Toys:** Use alphabet blocks, puzzles, or magnets to expose your child to letters. How-to: Name the letters as you play. Targeted skills: Letter recognition (tactile and visual).
- **Drawing and Scribbling:** Provide crayons and paper and encourage your child to draw and scribble. How-to: Talk about their drawings and label them. Targeted skills: Fine motor skills, pre-writing skills, associating symbols with meaning.
- **Identifying First Letter of Their Name:** Point out the first letter of your child's name whenever you see it. How-to: Make it a personal connection. Targeted skills: Letter recognition (personal significance).
- **Environmental Print:** Point out familiar signs and labels in your environment (e.g., "STOP" sign, cereal box). How-to: Read them aloud together. Targeted skills: Understanding that print has meaning in the real world.
- **Retelling Simple Stories:** After reading a story, encourage your child to retell it in their own words. How-to: Provide prompts if needed. Targeted skills: Narrative skills, comprehension.
- **Making Predictions About Stories:** Before turning the page, ask "What do you think will happen next?". How-to: Encourage critical thinking and engagement with the story. Targeted skills: Comprehension, inferencing.
- **Acting Out Stories:** After reading a story, act out simple parts together. How-to: Encourage imaginative play and language use. Targeted skills: Comprehension, expressive language, dramatic play.

# ENCOURAGING SOCIAL SKILLS

- **Parallel Play with Commentary:** (For kiddos under 3) Play alongside your child with your own toys and narrate what you are doing ("Mommy is building a tall tower"). How-to: Model social interaction and language. Targeted skills: Awareness of others, language exposure in a social context.
- **Turn-Taking in Play:** Engage in games that require taking turns, like rolling a ball or building with blocks. How-to: Emphasize "My turn," "Your turn." Targeted skills: Turn-taking, sharing.
- **Imitation in Social Games:** Play games like "Simon Says" to encourage imitation of actions. How-to: Focus on copying movements. Targeted skills: Imitation, following directions in a group.
- **Role-Playing Social Scenarios:** Act out simple social situations like greeting someone, sharing a toy, or saying "thank you." How-to: Model appropriate language and behavior. Targeted skills: Understanding social expectations, using appropriate language.
- **Playdates (Even Short Ones!):** Arrange short playdates with one or two other children to provide opportunities for interaction. How-to: Supervise and gently guide interactions. Targeted skills: Peer interaction, sharing, cooperation, conflict resolution (with guidance).