

Connections

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Language

Building Language Through Conversation



Having Quality Conversations with Your Child

Historically, intervention services and education focused on improving the quantity of words a child hears and/or sees to impact language growth. More recent studies point to the positive impact of the quality, more than the quantity, causing improved outcomes with language development. (Hart, B. & Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.) Similar findings point to the depth of vocabulary enhancing literacy in a similar fashion to the influence on language—what words and how they are incorporated into communication with children making more of an impact than the number of words understood and used. Dr. Dana Suskind's book *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain*. (2015) reinforced the findings of Hart & Risley and the importance of quality conversations between caregivers and young children.

Application

Good Quality Interactions

Good quality interactions are those that help to build the skills your child needs to learn advanced vocabulary, mental verbs, problem solving, critical thinking, etc. These language skills develop into reading comprehension skills. To build these skills, children need interactions where:

- The adults and child are both engaged and enjoying the time together.
- Turns are occurring in the conversations. The child and the adult are contributing to a longer conversation.
- The child takes the lead to pick the topic.

The established connection between what a parent says and what a child learns has more severe implications that previously anticipated...the home does truly hold the key to early childhood success.

- Rice Oral and Written Language (OWL) Lab's Summary of Hart & Risley's research

Young Children

The concept of having a conversation with a young child may seem counter intuitive, but even young children need conversation and language interaction modeled. Try to:

- ⇒ Expand your child's utterance.
- ⇒ Read to your child every day and interact with your child about the pictures and the words.
- ⇒ Substitute common words with more advanced vocabulary. For example, if your child says, "That car big," you can say, "Yes, it is huge, so much bigger than mine."



More tips for all ages

- ◇ Tell stories every day. Both stories about your experiences and creative stories.
- ◇ Involve the child in your plans and explain how and why.
- ◇ Engage your child in problem solving. Be sure to let them experiment and learn.
- ◇ Talk about what may happen in books.
- ◇ Talk with your child about what others might be feeling or thinking.

Learn More



Excel2—Language Access Series

This series brings together explanations of terminology, important information to consider, and ideas for improving access and language for deaf and hard of hearing children.

More Tips Here

- [Talking Counts by Reading Rockets](#)
- [Teach Stone blog: Better Interactions Lead to Better Literacy](#)
- * [Paths to Literacy: Cozying Up to Literacy: Getting Started with Interaction and Bonding Faculty Focus: Let Me Tell You a Story: Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Personal Stories](#)
- * [Paths to Literacy: The Importance of Storytelling and Story Creation](#)
- * [Brightly: Why 30 Million Words Are Critical to Your Child's Future Success](#)
- * [The 3Ts— a free website to help you support children's foundational brain development.](#)

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