

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD START TALKING?

1. Read, Read, Read! The best thing you can do for a child is to read books with them. Choose colourful books with large, simple pictures. Talk about the pictures rather than just reading the text. Encourage interaction from your child by sometimes leaving a gap e.g. 'this one's a'. Point to what you are talking about.
2. Encourage communication. Once your child is old enough to communicate using sign language or words encourage communication. Wait for your child to ask, gesture, or sign for a toy on a shelf, rather than just getting it for him. Do not anticipate your child's need or desires before he has a chance to make them known to you. If your child gets what he wants without communicating for it, he will not bother to point, gesture or ask.
3. Wait, wait, wait! Delay your responses to your child's pointing, gestures or babbling when he wants things. Pretend you don't understand what he wants to see if your child will try to verbally communicate. Pausing allows your child another chance to verbally express himself.
4. Parent's Speech. Label objects and actions in real life and in pictures. Use slow, simple speech when talking to your child. Never talk "baby talk" to your child, but instead always use real words. For example, say "bottle" rather than "baba."
5. Self Talk. Talk out-loud about what you are seeing, hearing, doing and feeling when your child is in earshot. Your child does not need to be paying attention to you when you are talking out-loud to receive the benefits of speech.
6. Parallel Talk. Talk out-loud about what is happening to your child. Describe what he is doing, seeing, hearing and feeling when your child is in earshot. Again, your child does not need to be paying attention to you.
7. Praise your child! Respond to your child's speech attempts with non-verbal and verbal praise. This will encourage him to try and communicate more and more.
8. Expansion Modeling. Try and add one to two words to what your child says when you respond back to him. Example: Child says "daddy" and you say "daddy home."
9. Use sign language. The use of sign language with young children encourages language development and does not hinder it! It helps children develop communication skills even if they are still struggling to speak with words.
10. Sing to your child. Song promotes vocal play, attention, listening, and speech. Sing simple songs your child can sing too. (Ex. The Itsy Bitsy Spider; The Little White Duck; Twinkle, Twinkle, Wheels on the Bus).

Visit: www.talkingpoint.org.uk for more information, factsheets and free resources for parents