

Supporting Language Development at Home



- **Speak to your child face to face and on their level.**
This allows your child to more closely watch your mouth, tongue, and teeth for speech sound production. It also helps them to watch your facial expressions and observe your body language. As a result, it is more interactive and less intimidating than speaking to them from above.
- **Offer your child choices (e.g., when eating a snack, getting dressed, doing a craft).**
This increases your child's number of opportunities for communication in a context in which they can be successful. You can also encourage children who are not talking yet to point to a desired object. The chance for a child to feel like they have control when participating in a task that is not optional can also help prevent meltdowns.
- **Give your child wait time in which to respond to something you have told or asked them.**
Children with communication disorders can be successful in following directions and answering questions, but they often need more time to process what we say to them. Frequent repetitions and pressure for a response can interrupt processing and overwhelm a child. Give your child at least 3-5 seconds to respond to you before repeating yourself.

- **Build on what your child says and model up.**

Add one or two words to your child's spontaneous speech. If your child says, "Goldfish," to request another cracker at snacktime, you might say "More Goldfish." If your child says, "Car drive," during play, you might say, "The car is driving." This encourages vocabulary expansion and acquisition of new grammatical structures.

- **Take turns with your child when talking and playing with them.**

Wait after talking to your child to give them a chance to respond. Look interested and acknowledge them when they speak. Provide choices and use objects as visual cues to encourage requests. Hold onto items your child is interested in until they make some kind of attempt to ask for it, which you may model for them. Encourage your child to join in during repetitive books, songs, and routines. Ask open ended questions to avoid simple "yes/no" one-word responses. These strategies result in longer interactions, more opportunities for children to demonstrate their knowledge, and strengthened relationships.