

# BUILDING EARLY LANGUAGE SKILLS

Supporting early language development in young children starts with becoming a partner in communication and play.

## BE A PLAY PARTNER

### Use fewer redirections.

When possible, limit the number of times you try to get your child to shift their attention away from what they are doing. Instead of saying “come here”, “look at this”, or “do this!”, try joining in on what they are doing.

### Follow their lead.

See how they choose to play and join in on what they are doing. Notice what they notice. Play the way they play.

### Imitate them.

Imitate their body movements, actions, and vocalizations in play.

### Bounce it back and forth.

When you imitate them, notice if they take a turn and imitate you back. Try to keep the interaction going by responding in turn and waiting to give them a chance to respond.

### Build on strengths and interests.

Think about what your child is good at and build on that. Think about the activities they prefer and the activities that you enjoy doing together and do more of those each day.

## BE A COMMUNICATION PARTNER

### Ask fewer questions.

Instead of quizzing and asking, “What’s this?”, say “It’s a car!”. Instead of asking “What are you doing?”, say “You’re swinging!”. Instead of asking, “Are you cold?”, say “Brrr, it’s cold outside”.

### Talk about what catches their attention.

Notice what they are looking at and talk about it. Notice what gets them excited and tell them about it.

### Honor all communication.

Help your child become a more confident communicator by noticing all of the ways they are already communicating and responding accordingly.

### Say the words you think they would want to say.

Be a detective and figure out what your child is trying to tell you with their nonverbal communication. Model words and gestures to match that message.

### Model without expectation.

Focus on modeling language for your child without putting pressure on them to imitate what you are saying.