

# Meaningful chatter

**S**TIMULATION is important for a child. A child is stimulated when he's touched, spoken to, shown pictures or objects, visits places and most importantly, when he interacts with people.

Parents who understand that their daily life does not have to come to a halt while teaching their child language, is more likely to involve the child in everyday routines and to accompany their joint activity with meaningful chatter.

## Some handy tips to promote speech and language skills in your child

It's important to remember that home and school can provide opportunities that no other environment can match, and children who enjoy doing activities together with adults build up a great volume of shared experience. The following strategies may be used in your daily routine at home and in school.



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### Use of scripts

A child's play with toys relating to a particular play theme such as "dress-up" and "baby" provides information about the vocabulary you're using with him. A child's play can focus his attention on things that interest him.



### Use of routines

Established routines help lay certain foundations for the child on which language can be built.

Routines help a child learn as routines happen daily in a child's life such as waking up, having a bath or snack time.

Routine activities such as singing nursery rhymes are also excellent to help a child anticipate and predict. Sing an action song such as Twinkle, twinkle little star a few times (with the corresponding actions) and then watch the child for a response.

### Follow your child's lead

Observing to see where the child is looking or what he's doing will give you information about what you will need to understand and interpret him better. It's easier to carry out an activity with a child when he's already focused.

### Provide correct models

If the child says something correct, always repeat the phrase in the correct and appropriate form. By imitating a child's way of talking or saying a word, you're indicating to the child that it's the right way to say the word or sen-



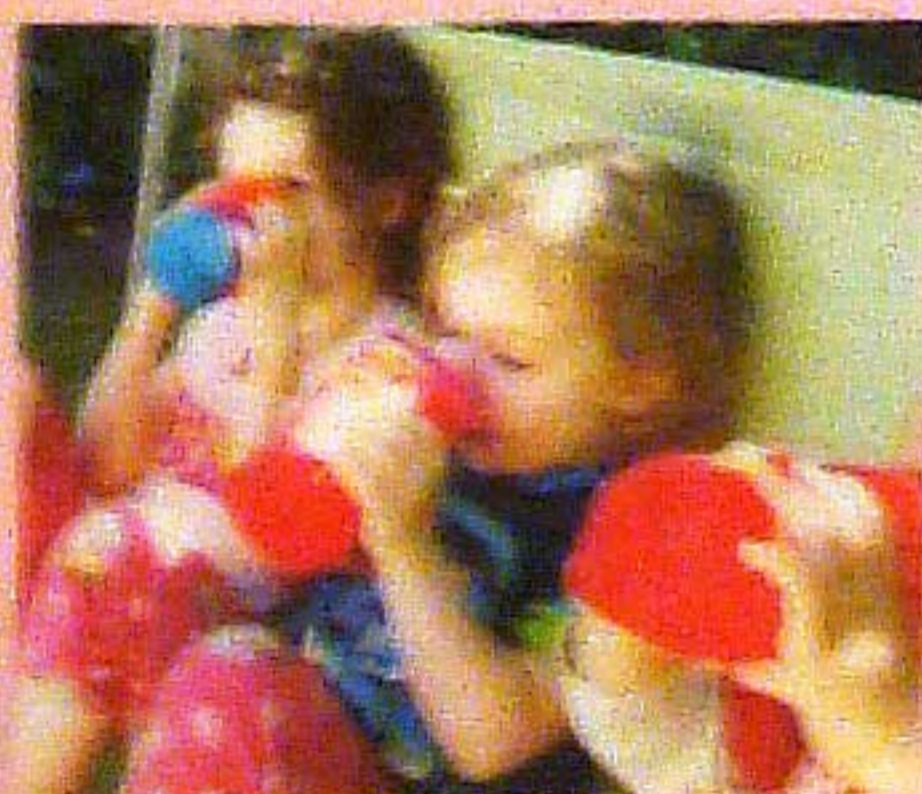
tence. Speaking correctly should be followed no matter what language is being spoken to the child.

### Use appropriate signals

We can communicate not only with the spoken word, but also by facial expressions, gestures and body language, all of which convey signals to the child. You can exaggerate the sounds or keywords within a phrase to help him learn a word. You can also vary the intonation in your voice to convey your message.

## Create communication opportunities

CHILDREN learn to communicate when you provide them with opportunities or reasons to do so. Here are some ways:



### 1. Offer choices

Offer your child choices such as "Do you want Milo or water?" Wait for the child to respond.

### 2. Rearrange the environment

You can perhaps relocate his favourite shoes or item to ensure

that it's not within reach but visible for him to request for it.

### 3. Do something unexpected

While doing something routine such as putting on your shoes, do something unexpected, for example, putting on the child's shoes instead. Look expectantly at the child and wait for a reaction.

### 4. Don't anticipate all of your child's needs

If the child needs help with something, wait until he indicates the need to you. This creates an opportunity to communicate. You can then provide a model for "how" to ask for an item if he is stuck.

### 5. Make mistakes

Children learn best through correction. So, it might be useful to do something wrong or even say something inappropriate and see if the child is aware of the



mistake. If he does not realise the error, point it out to him and encourage him to correct the mistake.

### 6. Accept your child's attempt at communication

Remember that "perfection" is not the goal, but getting a response is. Show enthusiasm for any attempt at speaking and putting together words that the child makes.

### 7. Interpret and expand any of the child's communication attempts

Take whatever the child says and

build on it. For example, if the child says, "Daddy gone!", you can say, "Yes, Daddy's gone to the office".

### 8. Use a lot of labels

Always name the things around the child so he becomes familiar with the vocabulary.

### 9. Take advantage of daily opportunities

Make use of everyday activities as a way of exposing the child to communication.

### 10. Listen to your child with enthusiasm and interest

If you want your child to communicate, you must show interest in what is being conveyed. Stop what you're doing and look at the child when he's trying to communicate with you.

### 11. Read to the child every day



Establish a routine that includes books. Talk about the stories and pictures. If the child wants to change the story and be creative, encourage it.

(Adapted from Making Chatter Matter — Understanding Language Impairment Within a Multilingual Environment, by Jennifer Eileen Peters.)

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