



Helping Your Child Use More Words

Match, Model , More

By making small changes in the way you talk to your child, you can help them learn to use longer, more complex sentences. Use the tips below during your daily conversations with your child and watch their language grow!

MATCH

Matching (copying) what your child says and does encourages him or her to copy you because it shows them you are paying attention and listening. Here are some suggestions:

- Play and talk face to face
- Copy the actions or words that your child uses while playing
- Then begin to add more words (Model)

MODEL

Modeling is repeating what your child says but saying it correctly. Without telling your child that he or she said it wrong, modelling lets you teach the correct way to say a word or sentence. Here are some ways you can model:

- Repeat exactly what your child says and add one word (e.g. Child "want juice." Adult: "I want juice")
- Try to add words in different locations: beginning, middle, or end (e.g., Child: "cookie." Adult: "more cookie", "cookie gone.")
- Try to add different kinds of words:
 - 0 action words: "cookie broke", "eat cookie"
 - 0 describing words: "big cookie", "my cookie"
 - 0 location words: "cookie in", "cookie on"

MORE

When your child says something incorrectly, you can use Recasting to repeat back what your child says in the correct way. This is a useful strategy to help your child learn to use more age-expected grammar. For example:

- If your child says "He blow the bubbles", you can say "Yes he BLEW the bubbles", emphasizing the correct use of the word "blow". If your says "her don't want to", you can say "SHE doesn't want to"
- Pick only one or two words in the sentence to recast
- Your child doesn't need to repeat you, but you can give him or her lots of praise if he or she does!



Daily Practice Ideas

Reading stories is a great way to model longer sentences:

Talk about the pictures and what you see the characters doing, emphasizing words you want your child to use.

Pretend Play

Set up a pretend restaurant or store using simple props. Invite your child's dolls or stuffed animals to play too! Practice different scripts that go with the theme of the play to practice pronouns e.g., "I want a burger", "She wants fries"

Get outside!

Go for a walk and talk about what you see happening around you. Use this opportunity to recast what your child says if he or she is missing words or needs help with grammar

The tips provided in this handout can be used whether you are trying to have your child use 2-3 words or 5-8 words.

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