

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN TO TALK

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Children learn to talk by listening and imitating speech of those who are around them. Normally a child utters his first word by 12 to 15 months. He will talk in sentences by 24 to 36 months. If he starts talking late, parents become concerned and start worrying. They need reassurance, encouragement and help from professionals. The following suggestions are aimed at providing ways of stimulating good speech and language.

- 1) **Spend more time** with your child. Talk, talk and talk with the child. Talk to him about everything in your surroundings as daily life situations provide good opportunities for your child to learn to speak.
- 2) Ensure that **speech learning** is made enjoyable. Children are good at imitation. Make use of this ability to the full extent.
- 3) Provide **a need to talk**, encourage him to talk. Reward your child's attempt at talking. Discourage others from talking for the child.
- 4) **Describe** what you are doing, while you are doing it. Become a kind of commentator by narrating his activities. For example: if he is playing with a car, you might say "Oh, you have a car"; " The car is big"; " The car is red"; "I like your car"; "Now you are pushing the car"; "there goes the car"; etc.
- 5) Encourage him to **ask questions** by asking questions. Use simple words and sentences.
- 6) **Tell stories** and read aloud to the child. Make sure that the child watches, attends and listens to you.
- 7) Provide the child with **opportunities to talk**. Encourage him to mix with other children and to tell you stories. Take time to listen and interrupt him while he is talking. Explain new words to him.
- 8) Each child is different; so let the child achieve what he can and not what you want him to do. **Don't compare** him with his brothers and sisters or any child of his age. Don't underestimate his abilities.
- 9) Let your child do things by himself, **let him explore** the environment and learn. Don't overprotect or reject him. Don't be inconsistent your attitude. Don't get discouraged if your child is slow at learning. Consult a speech therapist periodically for guidance.

More than anything, remember that he is your child and like any other child needs your love and affection.