

KIDS education

The Power of Talking

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What is one of the best (and most cost-effective) things you can do to help your child get ready for school? Talking with them! Knowing vocabulary words helps children make sense of the world around them, gives them the ability to ask when they don't understand or need help, and enables them to communicate with others. Learning to read is much easier when children know the meanings of the words. Our tips below give ten easy and fun ways to improve your child's language and literacy skills.

Tip 1: Talk with Your Child! (GREAT communication begins at birth)

- Describe what you are doing, even if it is something simple like washing dishes.
- Talk about things you see when you are out and about together.
- At bedtime, describe what happened during the day.

Tip 2: Listen to Your Child (Children's brains take longer to process language than adult brains.)

- After asking a question, wait patiently for your child's answer. Children often know the answer, but they need more time than adults to think about the words to use.

Tip 3: Mirror Your Children's Words (Communication is like a partner dance, you take turns!)

- Repeat the sounds your baby makes.
- Repeat and expand your children's words. For instance, "Mommy, doggie!" "Oh, there's a big, brown dog."

Tip 4: Have Fun with Books (It's Never Too Early!)

- Snuggle together and read books aloud.
- Look at illustrations with your child and talk about what you see.



- Ask your child to predict what will happen in the story after looking at the book's cover.

Tip 5: Use Props and Toys (Colorful images and sounds aid for language development)

- Ring bells or tap spoons in time to music.
- Create puppet shows using stuffed animals.

Tip 6: Create Stories (Turn your child into an author!)

- Ask your child to tell you about a picture she has drawn and write her words underneath.
- Proudly display your child's artwork on your refrigerator.

Tip 7: Play Together (Children learn best through play)

- Describe what your child is doing while playing. ("I see you are making a big block structure. Wow, it is really tall.")
- Let your child take the lead, but join in and have fun together.

Tip 8: Repetition is FUN! (Children learn easily through repetition)

- Sing a song or read a book aloud again and again.

Tip 9: Ask Questions! (Open-ended questions help children use words.)

- Ask a question that requires thought and a descriptive answer. ("What would you like to do today?" "What do you see over there?")
- Ask multiple choice questions. ("Do you want broccoli or fried chicken?")
- Ask questions to spark the imagination. ("If you had one wish, what would you wish for?")

Tip 10: Recite rhymes together. (Rhyming breaks words into sounds; hearing sounds in words builds reading skills.)

- Recite nursery rhymes, songs, and fingerplays with your child.
- Sing songs and clap to the beat. [wfm](#)

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Zero to Three®, tips on learning how to talk to your baby:

www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/helping-learn-to-talk.html

For a summary of scientific studies supporting these tips:

www.everychildreadytoread.org/project-history%09/literature-review-2010

Join the Fred Rogers Center Early Learning Environment to access educational activities that help children build language & literacy skills:

ele.fredrogerscenter.org/

Tips to parents regarding ways to talk and listen to their children:

www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/