



## Laguna Beach Language & Speech Clinic

Helping Children and Empowering Parents

31642 So. Coast Hwy, Ste. #205, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

[www.lagunabeachlanguagespeech.com](http://www.lagunabeachlanguagespeech.com) 949 715 5845

### 14 Ways to Boost Language

By Lynn Epstein, MS, CCC-SLP

#### Timing is everything

You have to know your child's limits. Every day is different. The school day, an unscheduled visit/event, a lot of drive time in the car, poor sleep from the night before...all these things add up and can impact a child's ability to attend, listen, process and express themselves. Remember, teaching moments need to be embedded in fun and not too often. Too much correction or teaching can create anxiety and consequently impede language learning. So with teaching moments the challenge also includes timing. That is, knowing when to stop when you see your child's frustration level increasing. Some kids show frustration by wiggling more, faster speech, becoming louder, pulling at their fingers, twisting their hair, rocking a chair, etc. Notice how your child shows their anxiety and/or frustration is rising. As a parent, you want to be a safe haven; the place where it's ok to be done, relax and be themselves. You want to be perceived as accepting and nurturing vs. bossy and nagging. It's a delicate and tricky balance.

#### Parent TRAP: "Say this", "What's this?"

It's hard not to use those prompts to get your child to repeat or say something but it often limits the language experience. Instead be like a sports commentator and narrate what is happening and do a play by play so your child has a model and can learn how to talk about he sees, hears and feels.

#### Use Modeling

Children will be fumbling and stumbling while building their language skills. You will hear many errors in articulation and grammar. Avoid "say this" or "that's not right". Try using your voice and tone to exaggerate and repeat the sound or word the child may have had difficulty with. i.e., Oh you want **milk**, Yes, get **his** shoe, He **ate** the food.

#### Repetition

A child needs to be exposed to a word 15-20 before they understand it. Children with language learning deficits even more! That's why repetition across settings is so important. Be sure to introduce and repeat new words again and again...and again...and then one more time...and then one after that!

Use the new word in the house, outside, at grandmas' at the store and with different people as well.

Plus, the bonus of repetition is that once a child is familiar with terms and ways to say things, sentence order...they will use them more often and then gradually master them.

#### Vocabulary & Expressive Language Development

Work new words into everyday routines. Use Adjectives to describe, compare and contrast things. "Whoa..this apple is red and this banana is yellow", "Look, this is rough but this one feels fluffy."

Expose your child to new concepts and boost vocabulary. For Toddlers: sprinkle in some synonyms.

Food time is the great place to practice. Sprinkle in some synonyms. Tasty words are so scrumptious

You can mention:

texture: soft, rough, sticky;

size: tiny, huge

shape: round, triangular

color: brown, light blue

#### Messenger

Make your child the messenger and give him opportunities to use words and tell a family member or friend something. Word, phrase or sentence level depends on type of language your child is using.

Tell your brother, "Time for dinner!" Coach them on a phone call to a friend or relative. "Hi, Mom says please get milk".

#### Phone a friend!

Kids are attracted to phones so use this tool to practice storytelling. Using a speaker phone, you can easily start the story and get them going. Use visual cues like pictures, movie ticket stubs, to help cue a story. How much coaching depends on child's age, language level and how much phone experience they may have had!



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### Fill in the blank

When children become familiar with routines, books and songs, start giving them opportunities to fill in the blank. Get your shoes and \_\_\_\_\_, The boy went in the \_\_\_\_\_. Twinkle Twinkle little \_\_\_\_\_.  
Jargon for this technique is: auditory closure, grammatical completion

### Give a choice and avoid the yes/no question questions

By offering a choice; do you want juice or milk...it helps children to use pointing, 1 word or phrases to respond vs. shaking a head yes or no. Feel free to model the answer to show your child how to get what he wants. "You tell me juice or milk".

### Play Possum

When trying to get to the next level; stages move from pointing to words, words to phrases, phrases to sentences, sentences to conversation. Play dumb and cue your child to repeat the word or any approximation.

### Pull the Crazy Card

Give language life. Be silly, sing goofy songs, use different voices and intonation patterns. Create songs that go with a routine. Use an old songs and make up your own words. Classics, The clean up song... your own song, On the sidewalk, we ride our bike. This is the way we brush our teeth, brush our teeth This is no audition and being a mom gives you a huge hall pass to be silly and goofy.

### Be Dramatic Dahling!

When reading a story, bring the drama! Use different voices for characters, change volume and intensity as the story progresses. Use pauses for dramatic effects. Add and vary vocal intensity to act out emotion words. It's fun and gives meaning to the word. Heighten the fun and make the animal sounds and sound effects that go with the story. Give them something to remember!

### Do you hear that?!

Have fun identifying the sounds you hear while you take a walk, park the car, get the mail, and look out the window. Everyday sounds are a great way to practice listening and labeling. Model what you hear and the response you desire.

Gesture to your ear: "What did you hear?"

Look towards the source of the sound (localization)

Model/Label: "I hear .... bird, firetruck, gate, telephone, trash truck, dog, laughing, singing, guitar, doorbell, motorcycle, teapot, toaster oven, clock, etc.

### Social Praise

Show how much it means when your child attempts to communicate with you. Let them see it in your expression with smiles, feel it in your hugs and high fives and verbal recognition, "I like the way you said that. Great try". The extra attention is a very effective reinforcement and demonstrates some social qualities of language.