

## Stage Two: Ages 3 to 5 Years (Home)

### TOP TIPS FOR HELPING CHILDREN WITH THEIR SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

It's great to be focused on making sure children have all the advantages they can get for not just learning to speak well for its own sake but also to set them up for the best learning opportunities when they start school.

There is startling research that has shown if a child is only given instructions in the first five years of their life they won't have the vocabulary to hold a conversation by the time they are 14. So, get chatting!

The first step is recognising those moments when to chat. You know, just open your mouth and talk. Or sing even.

- **Look at their face and look them in the eyes as much as you can while you talk to your child so they can see what your lips are doing when you are speaking.** Children learn by doing and if they can see how your mouth forms sounds and words they are less likely to pick up a speech impediment or misarticulate sounds and words.
- **When you are getting ready for the day.** When you are dressing your child ask them to put on their blue jeans and red top, for example. Put your yellow lunchbox into your school bag is another.
- **Prepping food.** You have to prep food at some stage. Breakfast, lunch or dinner. Or even tidying up. Ask them to help..."Come and help me peel the potatoes" "Let's cut our toast into squares today" (well done, you have introduced a maths concept to their skill set!)
- **Jobs around the house.** If this is part of your routine get your child to help out but not like a chore. Talking about getting the vacuum cleaner out or closing the curtains at night, doing the dishes, all these opportunities are perfect for finding out more about their day and also to introduce new language.
- **While you are doing chores ask specific questions.** "Who did you play with today" "Did you play in the sandpit?" "What was the best part of your day?" "Did you get to read your favourite book?" All these questions target a specific time in their day so it's easier for them to think and respond. General questions flood their brain and they can't think of anything specific (usually) except one word answers. Something like, "Good" or "OK" if you ask "How was your day?"
- **Going for a walk.** Just chat away about what you can see, hear and feel. This can also be the time to connect with quiet and the time to stop talking but if something of real interest, a lovely bird song for example, comment on it. Expand one word into a sentence of three or four
- **Gardening.** Being outside in nature is a fabulous way to connect with your child and opens up so many opportunities to use different language around all things science. Feel the soil, is it cold or warm? Is it crumbly or thick. Turn the tap on the hose to water plants, a great start to begin talking about sunlight, water and food for plants and us, as humans.

- **In the car.** Many, many things to point out in your drive. Look up! What do you see? Point out different things on your journey. Or sing! Turn on the favourite song of the moment and sing along. Use the rear view mirror for fleeting eye contact, it's a very neat way to connect.
- **Grocery shopping.** And who doesn't love this with children! Turn that horrible experience into something a little bit cool. Take a deep breath and just know going slower than what you'd like will make this experience a tiny bit better. How? Count the pieces of fruit as you put them into the bags. Discuss colour and shape of fruit and vegetables. Ask them to get certain products (helps with reading) off the shelf. Use the correct name and maybe the first letter of the word to help. At the checkout talk to the assistant using please and thank you so your child will begin to learn the art of conversation.
- **Bedtime.** Perfect time to read a book or two and discuss the rich language in all books. The illustrations, font, text, colour, word choice. Change the pitch and speed of your words, add excitement and personality to the characters. If a child knows a book really well, make mistakes so they can correct you. Children love this!! This is the best time to wind down and make the connection with soft words, touch and looking into their eyes. This is something you cannot replace with anything else and this would be my top tip above anything. Do not allow any tech device in the bedroom and share connected time with your child as they head off to sleep. Invaluable.
- **Storytelling.** Children learn from stories about the past and the future. Parents can help children build their storytelling skills. Try showing the child a video of themselves playing and asking them to explain what's happening, for example. It's important for them to tell the story, imagine what's happening and use increasingly complex words. At this age, don't hesitate to ask "why" and "how" and try to answer children's questions with clear explanations.

