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## **How to Help Children's Speech & Language Development** **Information Sheet No. 5**

*Fifth in a series of information sheets on children's communication difficulties aimed at health and education professionals, parents and caregivers.*

What can parents and caregivers do to really help develop and stimulate their children's speech / language and general communication skills? *Quite a lot!* These are a few ideas we feel are most important... There's lots more!

### **1. Time**

Spend time each day with your child playing games, role playing, reading books. It's a busy world so make it part of your daily regime.

### **2. Face To Face**

**Get down!** Be face to face as much as possible when playing. This means kneel or lie down on the floor with your child. Speech has so much more impact this way. Try your child on the chair and **you** sitting on the floor!

### **3. Child Chooses**

Follow your child's interest and talk about what your child is doing or playing with. It might be the lovely new toy or a beautiful autumn leaf found in the park. Let them decide the play. Remember you can talk about almost anything.

### **4. Reduce Questions**

Try to reduce your questions, especially those starting with "wh-" (eg. What, when, where, who). Instead "model" language e.g., "it's a *big, red ball.*"

### **5. Describe / Add**

Expand your child's sentences by adding one or two words to their utterance. Use verbs (doing words) e.g, "eating", adjectives (describing words) e.g, "hot", prepositions (tells you "where") e.g, "under", and conjunctions (joining words) e.g, "because".

### **6. Photos**

Take lots of photos of your child and his/her "environment" (people/places) and talk about these. Make double prints and keep a copy easily accessible to your child. Look at the photos often and talk about them.

### **7. Music / Art / Craft**

Have fun with songs at home, in the car, on TV. Sing along together to favourite rhymes. Make things together using boxes, paper, icypole sticks or anything! Talking **WHILE** you are constructing is most important.

### **8. "Correct" Sound Errors**

Not exactly "correcting", but rather **emphasise the correct sounds** after your child misarticulates. Remember, there are many sounds with different stages of development (see Information Sheet No 10, "Developmental Phonological Disorders", for more information).

### **9. Books, Books, Books**

I cannot emphasise this strongly enough. Share stories – not just at bedtime but at least once during the day. Read the story "**s l o w l y**", or make up your own story. Perhaps ask your child to tell you the story back.

### **10. When To Seek Help**

**Don't wait!** Early assessment is best. (See the clinic's other Information Sheets for further information.)

NB: The information contained herein is not advice. It is general information for adults on children's communication development. It is not intended to be used as a sole means of identifying children with communication difficulties. Advice from a qualified paediatric Speech Pathologist is recommended. This information is copyright, Vincent A Borg, 2009