



Family activities can enhance speech and language. Encourage your child to explain how to play and win.

Educational Fun

Encouraging Speech and Language Development

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There are many things parents can do to encourage speech and language development at home. Language learning correlates with life experience. Families can expand a child's vocabulary and comprehension through fun family activities.

When we expose our children to more things and talk about them, their vocabulary and comprehension will expand. Include your children in a cooking activity. They learn measurements, sequence, vocabulary, taking turns, and listening skills. Then they enjoy something delicious to eat that they helped create. Many simple recipes are fun and nutritious.

Movies are fun to talk about after they are seen. If your child needs more support, stop the movie as it is being watched at home to ask questions and discuss events. Ask the five questions — who, what, where, when and why. Then add a how question to the mix. Have your child make up an alternate ending to the movie. Ask him or her what he or she liked best about the movie.

Encourage your children to talk about their video games, sports and other activities. Have them explain to you the instructions on how to play, including the objective, the tools, and the important elements needed to win. This is a way of them separating the main idea and supporting details. Better reading comprehension later is the result.

After you have participated in

a family activity such as visiting the zoo or a museum, discuss the sequence of events that occurred. This builds recall and sequencing skills. Perhaps you can have your child define the new words learned, either from the dictionary, discussion or memory.

Long road trips in the car provide other opportunities. This is a perfect time to play geography by naming places with the last letter of the location named by another player, or the opposite game, such as what is the opposite of hot. The synonym game involves naming words that mean the same thing, such as like words for big, until someone gives up.

How about taking turns building a story? Use your imagination. There are many games you can play in the car that involve words rather than movies or technology.

Reading is a great solitary learning experience. But it can also be a wonderful family event. After my children were old enough to read on their own, they still enjoyed having stories read to them. We would take turns reading aloud to each other and then comment on the progression of the story. We would infer what wasn't being said, draw conclusions based on the facts we did have, and debate the reason things happened.

Reading is always a wonderful learning tool. Turn it into a social interaction as well.

Television doesn't have to be a passive recreational activity. When families watch TV programs together, it can be educational to talk about them as well. ●