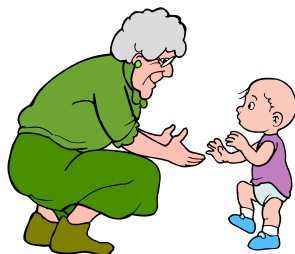




IDEAS TO ENCOURAGE FIRST WORDS IN TODDLERS

CHOICES

It's a good idea to offer choices to your child. This will give them some control over their environment and give them an opportunity to communicate what they want by pointing, even if they can't tell you with words what they want. You can offer choices during mealtime and playtime and other times throughout the day. For example, during mealtime, you can hold up your child's milk and a food item and say "Do you want milk or toast?" When your child indicates what he wants by reaching or pointing to it, you can give him the label for the item. "Milk. Do you want milk? Okay, here's your milk!" "Yummy, good milk!" In this example, your child has made a choice and you have given him many repetitions of the target word.



MORE!

A good early word to practice with your child is the word "MORE". Physically, it's a relatively easy word to produce as it begins with the /m/ sound which is an early developing sound. The word "more" can be encouraged in various situations throughout the day. For example, during snack time, you could give your child only 2-3 cheerios (for example) and wait for him to look at you and indicate in some way that he wants more (e.g. this could be by crying, pointing, grunting, etc.) This is your opportunity to model the word "more". Be sure not to deny your child the food until he says the word (he may not be ready to say it yet!), but give him lots of good models of the word before you give him more. For example, you could say "More? Do you want more? Okay, here's more. More cheerios!" Make sure your child is looking at your face when you say these words, so he can see how the word is produced.

BE CREATIVELY SILLY!

Create opportunities throughout the day for your child to have to communicate. As parents, we are very good at anticipating our children's needs and giving them what they want before they even have a chance to indicate that they want it! It's okay to hold back sometimes and be creatively silly! Here are some ideas to encourage communication attempts in your child. These give you great opportunities to model for your child a word he could say in that situation. Beside each idea, are words you could model for your child during this interaction:

- ✓ Put a favorite toy in a see-through container that your child cannot open. ("open", name of toy)
- ✓ Place a favorite toy on top of the fridge where your child can see but cannot reach. (name of toy, "up", "please")
- ✓ Eat a desired food item in front of your child without offering any to the child. (name of food item, "please")
- ✓ Open a jar of bubbles, blow some, then close the jar tightly and hand it to the child. ("open", "blow", "bubbles")



POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ *REDUCE YOUR LANGUAGE LEVEL.* Even though your child may be able to understand long sentences, it is important that we use 1 - 2 word sentences when modeling language so he can learn those words. (It's the same as if we were learning to speak German, we would need our "teachers" to use single words and repeat them many times so we could learn them!!)
- ✓ *REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT.* As stated above, we need to give many models of the target word in a variety of settings before our child will be able to say it back for us.
- ✓ *AVOID PRESSURING YOUR CHILD.* If we constantly say, "What's this?", and "Say cookie", your child probably will not respond. Even we as adults don't like to feel that we are being tested all day! Instead of asking your child questions and "testing" him all day, comment and model on what you and your child are doing!
- ✓ *PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD.* Your child will learn much better in a fun, relaxed environment. Comment on what he is interested in and looking at (even if it is the box his fancy new toy came in!!).

