

Eliciting Language Techniques

Encouraging speech and language in young children is extremely important for building language skills. The following verbal and nonverbal techniques can be used informally during play to encourage a child to produce speech and language. The nonverbal techniques are used to entice the child to respond, request, or engage in the activity. The verbal techniques are meant to provide a model for the child rather than asking the child to repeat what you say.

Nonverbal Strategies

1. Violation of a routine event

Example:

- When you are making a craft, you might say, "Let's paint!" – but you do not have a paintbrush lying out on the table for him/her to use.
- When you are playing dress up you might say, "Let's put on our shoes" – but only have one shoe for him/her to put on.

2. Withhold an object

Example:

- While making a craft with the child, you will show the child the glue but do not give it to him/her until the child asks.
- While playing kitchen and pretending to eat soup, you will use a spoon to eat your soup but you will not give him/her a spoon until the child asks for it.

3. Violate the object function or manipulation

Example:

- When the child is making a craft, you will give the child the paintbrush with no paint on it.
- While playing dress up, you will give the child a pair of pants that are too small or too large for him/her to put on.

4. Hide objects

Example:

- When the child is making a craft, you will hide the glue and wait for the child to ask for it before finding it together.
- When playing kitchen and pretending to make a cake, you will say, "let's mix the cake". You will hide a kitchen utensil, such as a bowl from the child and wait for the child to ask for the specific object.

Verbal Strategies

1. Self-Talk – talk out loud about your own actions; talk out loud about what you are seeing, hearing, doing, or feeling when the child is nearby. He/she does not have to be close to you when you are talking out loud. Use slow, clear, simple words and phrases that the child can understand.

Examples:

- When you are making a craft and the child at the table not paying attention, you might say, "color circle red - pick up glue - sticky glue - glue the circle - the circle is red."
- You and the child are playing with building blocks, you might say, "I'm stacking blocks - stack one block - stack two blocks - my tower is high - ahh my tower fell over!"

2. Parallel Talk – talk out loud about what is happening to the child. Use words that describe what he/she is doing, seeing, or hearing when the child is within hearing range. Like self-talk, he/she does not need to be close to you when you talk out loud; the child only needs to be within hearing range. Be sure to use slow, clear simple words and phrases.

Example:

- When the child is playing with a ball and then goes to sit in a chair to make a craft, you might say, “Roll the ball – get the ball – pick up the ball – sit in the chair – pick up the color – color the circle.”
- You and the child are playing with building blocks, you might say, “stack the blocks - build a tower - stack one block - pick up red block - put red block down - knock over the tower ”

3. Imitations – imitate what the child says. Often, when an adult imitates what the child says, the child will then repeat the imitation. If the child repeats the imitation, the adult then may use other response forms to teach the child a variety of replies.

Example:

- The child says, “car”. The adult will then say “car”. The child will repeat “car”. The adult will then say, “Give me car”. The child will repeat, “Give me car”.

4. Expansion – adding one or two words to the child’s production when the adult responds back. The child’s word order may be different than yours. Let him/her hear the right order and correct basic grammar. Don’t worry about using perfect grammar yourself.

Examples:

Child says:	Adult responds with:
“up”	“come up”
“mommy”	“mommy here”
“boy eat”	“the boy is eating”
“no want”	“I don’t want it”
“we play car”	“Let’s play with the car”

5. Extension – when responding back to the child, add one or two words to the child’s production as well as new information to the sentence. Like expansion, the child’s word order may be different than yours. Let him/her hear the right order and correct basic grammar. Don’t worry about using perfect grammar yourself.

Example:

Child says:	Adult responds with:
“baby cry”	“the baby is crying, he sad. ”
“doggy house”	“the dog is inside the house, he is cold”
“boy eat”	“the boy is eating, he is hungry.”

6. Buildups and Breakdowns – When the child speaks build up the child’s production with an expansion and then break the expansion into pieces, then build the child’s production back up, making it a complete sentence. This may happen over several seconds. This technique demonstrates to the child how sentences get put together.

Example:

- Child: “doggy house”
Adult: “yes, the doggy is in his house. The house. He’s in the house. In the house. The doggy is in the house. The doggy. The doggy is in the house.”
- Child: “hat off”
Adult: “Yes, your hat is off your head. Your head. The hat is off. Off your head. The hat is off your head.”

7. Praise – respond to the child’s verbal speech attempts and requests by using verbal and/or non-verbal responses.

- Non-verbal praise – a smile, a hug, eye contact, clapping your hands, giving them the object requested.
- Verbal praise – saying to the child “Good job!”, “Good Talking!”, “Way to go!”