



Tips On

CREATING LANGUAGE-RICH ENVIRONMENTS FOR INFANTS & TODDLERS

Research shows that children who heard the most words when they were babies did the best in school. So by making sure that children grow up in a language-rich environment, you give them a great foundation for learning.

Here's how:

1 Become a "sportscaster."

Just like a radio announcer at a sports event, describe your actions and things that your baby or toddler is experiencing as they happen (such as I'm going to pick you up now, and their actions, you're kicking your legs). Make this kind of modified "play-by-play" a relaxed and natural part of your daily routines.

2 Respond to sounds.

When infants coo or babble, look at them, smile, and coo, copy their sounds or say a few simple words back.

3 Be a verbal label-maker.

Name objects and actions that children see or experience. You can even say the words in more than one language. Use the language that is most natural to you when talking to your baby.

4 Expand vocabulary.

When you describe something, add an adjective (e.g., that is a **green** leaf or a **small** leaf or an **oak** leaf instead of "that is a leaf"). Once your child has learned a word, introduce a synonym (e.g., a small "stick" might also be a "twig" or "we are going up the stairs" could be "we are climbing up the stairs").

5 Read.

It is never too early to begin reading aloud to children. Sometimes infants like to look at books together and have the adult name things.

6 Sing.

Songs introduce vocabulary and simple rhymes help children learn to distinguish between similar sounds.

7 Ask children to use the words they know.

As toddlers learn how to say words, invite them to ask for things by name instead of just pointing or yelling.

As they grow, encourage them to use full sentences instead of single words, but don't expect perfection. Young children often make mistakes when speaking. Constant correction of imperfect pronunciation or grammar can discourage a child from trying to speak. Instead, model the language you want children to use. Eventually, they will copy your example.

8 Be a good listener.

Listen for a baby's attempts to communicate and respond accordingly. When possible, give children your undivided attention by getting down to their level and making eye contact.

Show toddlers that conversations include both speaking AND listening. Children who know that someone is truly listening will feel encouraged to speak.

We model language rather than teach it. Be a great model. Speak with your child every time you are together.

To learn more, watch *A Place of Our Own* on your local public television station and visit the website at www.aplaceofourown.org

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