

“TOP TEN”

Suggestions for Parents & Child Care Providers

- 1. Decrease your sentence length to 1 or 2 words if your child has difficulty with saying sounds or words.**

Single words should be used as target sounds. The rule of thumb for facilitating sound or word production is that what you say should be no more than one word longer than what your child is producing.

- 2. Name objects and actions with single words to describe your child’s play and the actions of adults.**

Using just one word gives the child the opportunity to see the range of use of a single word while hearing the word frequently. While a 24-month-old child only needs to hear a word three times to *understand* what concept it represents, a study of 75 24-month-old children found that none was able to *say* a word after hearing it only three times.

- 3. Establish eye contact when talking with your child.**

Show interest in what your child is trying to tell you by looking directly at them.

- 4. Don’t ask a question unless you truly need the information.**

Eliminate questions such as, “What’s that?” Instead, label an object using a rising intonation, giving your child an opportunity to try saying a word.

Adults saying words help vocabulary more than asking what it is.

- 5. Produce words with a rising intonation to facilitate spontaneous imitation.**

Repeat the child’s words to encourage a conversation. Use just one word in many different ways. For example, you can say the single word “ball” to communicate a range of activity such as:

“Here’s the ball.”

“Throw the ball.”

“Look at the ball rolling.”

“I got the ball.”

“Go get the ball.”

“Do you want the ball?”

Children who have some difficulty saying words may need to hear a word 30 or

more times before they can attempt to say it. Children love repetition in play, so parents have many opportunities to use a word in the context of an activity.

6. Take turns. Communication is facilitated best when there is one child word for every adult word.

A ratio of three to one for adult to child utterances is acceptable, but a great ratio does not help to facilitate communication at all. Parents often talk more and ask many questions to encourage children to communicate, but this strategy has the opposite effect.

7. If your child has some difficulty saying sounds and closing syllables, target age-appropriate sounds, especially at the ends of single- syllable words.

Targeting is the most effective strategy for facilitating sound development.

8. When labeling objects or actions, try to choose words that have a sound your child has said in another word.

Your child is more likely to attempt a word if he or she has used sounds in that word before. If your child has problems with sound production, many of his or her early words will have the same sound in them.

9. If your child does not use a particular sound, target that sound in all of your communication with the child.

Targeting focuses the child's attention on that sound, and he or she will often begin to produce the sound.

10. If your child produces one word clearly, add another word to that first word.

If the word is not produced with all the sounds that the child should be able to produce at his or her age, repeat the word, targeting the incorrect sound with a rising intonation.

If the child says, "ball" (without the // is acceptable in young children) respond by saying "ball go" or "John's ball" or "my ball". If the child says "ball here", respond with "ball go here."