

# LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

## At a Glance



### Naming:

Do lots of naming of the target words during play so that your child hears the names often. While children are learning language, it is better to give them the names of the words, rather than asking 'what's that?', as they may not have the language needed to respond.

### Commenting:

Talk about what you and/or your child are doing, looking at, playing with, touching, eating etc. Use short phrases and repeat key words. There is no expectation that your child will respond or copy you; instead the focus is for them to hear lots of language to accompany their play/actions etc.

### Choices:

Offering choices encourages your child to interact and use words, rather than responding yes/no or not responding at all. It is beneficial to make choices visual where possible; show your child the two options and hold them up as you name each one. Let your child respond using pointing, words, sounds or gestures, then name the item they have chosen clearly.

### Pausing:

Pause in anticipation to give your child time to listen, understand what was asked, and to respond. Show them you are waiting by looking expectantly for a reply. If they don't respond, you can say the words you wanted them to say.

### Following their Lead:

Talk about, and play with, the things your child is playing with and/or looking at. Respond to your child's interactions and interests. Model/copy your child's actions, words or sounds. This can support the child's attention and interaction skills, as well as their language skills.

### Copy and Add

Repeat back what your child has said and add another word on, so that they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer.

### Use Gestures/Signing:

Use a gesture or sign when you name something; this can help your child understand what you are saying. They may begin using the gesture/sign before they begin using real words. Be sure to say the word at the same time as doing the gesture/sign.

### Say it Again and Again:

Children learn best with repetition; repeat the key words over and over again during play, so they learn to associate that word with the object/action.

### Reducing Questions:

As adults we use questions to see what children know, but this is difficult for children who are learning to talk. It is better to add a comment to explain what is happening, so they have the opportunity to learn new words.

### Use Communicative Temptations:

Sometimes children need a reason/opportunity to communicate. By putting desired items out of reach or in a hard to open box, you've created an opportunity for them to communicate with you and ask for help.



# LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

## More Top Tips

### SHORT, REGULAR PLAY OPPORTUNITIES:

- Try to spend 10-20 minutes a day playing with your child. If possible, set a regular time so it is easier for you to fit into your daily routine.
- Choose times when your child is happy to engage and play; avoid times when they're watching a TV show, when they're tired or unhappy, or when you feel stressed/rushed etc.
- Stop if you feel that your child is losing interest.

### AVOID DISTRACTIONS:

- Support your child to focus and concentrate during play by turning off other distractions; make sure the television, tablet, radio etc. are switched off.
- Put distracting toys out of sight if they're not what you're playing with at the time.

### AVOID VAGUE WORDS:

- Try to avoid using vague words such as 'please', 'more', 'thank you' etc., as children can sometimes over-generalize the use of these and use them in place of more meaningful words. For example they may use "more" to request more banana, more bubbles blowing and the ball rolling again. It is better to model words that add content and meaning to your child's language instead (i.e. the names of the toys, actions, locations etc.).

### BE POSITIVE AND CONSISTENT:

- Remember that learning language doesn't happen overnight. Be positive about the progress that your child is making and the strategies you are using. Use the strategies consistently during play with your child.

### AVOID CORRECTING YOUR CHILD'S WORDS DIRECTLY:

- As your child starts learning to talk the words they say may not sound exactly like how an adult says them, for example they may say "tat" instead of 'cat'. Be sure to praise any attempts they make, and then say the word clearly to them while playing, for example "yes, a cat".

### GET DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL:

- When playing games with your child, be sure to get down to their level and play face to face with them. For example kneel down, lay on the floor, sit on the floor with your child etc.

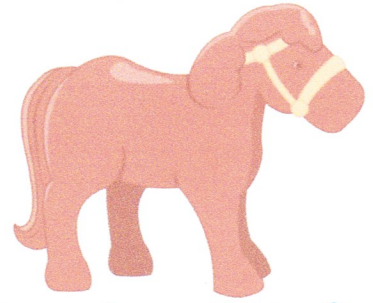
### HAVE FUN!

- Enjoy the playtime with your child; children learn best when they are having fun. Your child will stay engaged for longer during play if you look like you are having fun too.



# TOY ANIMALS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any toy animals, e.g. farm set including cow, pig, horse, dog, cat, sheep etc.
- Optional: Fences, farmhouse/barn.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Any words that match the animal names (e.g. cow, pig, sheep), Action words (e.g. sleeping, eating, walking).

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Naming:

- Name the animals as your child holds them up to show you, or as you show them your child.
- Greet the animals – e.g. “hello cow”, “hello pig” as you pretend that the animals are saying hello.
- Use symbolic noises (animal noises etc.). Using animal noises (e.g. “neigh”, “moo” etc.) during play is a fun way to encourage language, particularly if your child is not at the level of using real words just yet. You can mix these in with naming/commenting during play.

• **Commenting:** Talk about what you/your child is doing in play using simple words and phrases, for example “the cow is eating”, “cow’s walking”, “in the pen” etc. Depending on your child’s level, you may need to use single words to comment e.g. “cow”, “eating”.

• **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said during play and add another word on so they hear how to make their sentences longer, for example, child: “cow”, adult: “cow’s eating”. If your child uses two words, you repeat them and add a third, etc.

• **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting, be sure to say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play.

• **Choices:** At the start of play, you could keep all of the animals out of reach of your child, then offer them a choice of who they want to put into the barn first, e.g. “the cow or the sheep?”. Be sure to show your child the two choices as you say them, and to repeat their choice clearly to them. Remember your child may indicate their choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing or using a word.

• **Reducing Questions:** During play, try to avoid asking lots of questions e.g. “what’s that?”, “what’s he doing?” etc. Your child may not have the words to answer you. It is better to focus on naming and commenting until your child is using more words.

• **Following their Lead:** Watch what your child is doing in play, then copy their actions/sounds/words. For example if they are making the cow eat, you could make the sheep eat too. Be sure to comment on their actions during play too.



# BALLS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any balls suitable for the age/stage of the child- soft, foam/cloth/plastic balls are ideal.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Ball, Bounce, Roll, Push, Stop, Go, Kick.

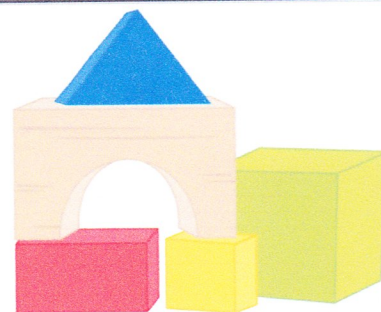
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Talk about what you/your child is doing in play with the ball. Use simple words and phrases, for example "rolling the ball", "kicking the ball" etc. Depending on your child's level, you may need to use single words to comment e.g. "ball", "rolling".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said during play and add another word on so they hear how to make their sentences longer, for example, child: "ball", adult: "pushing the ball". If your child uses two words, you repeat them and add a third, etc.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting, be sure to say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play, e.g. "ball", "Johnny's ball", "roll the ball" etc.
- **Pausing:**
  - Before rolling/bouncing/kicking the ball, rock it back and forth a little and wait (show your child you're waiting for them to say something by having an excited look on your face). Your child is likely to communicate in some way that they want you to roll/bounce/kick the ball; they may use eye contact, a sound, a gesture or a word. Once they have shown that they want you to roll/bounce/kick etc. the ball to them, you can **say the words** that your child needs, such as "roll", "go", "ball" etc.
  - Before rolling the ball you could say "ready, set, go!"; you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch what your child is doing in play with the ball, then copy their actions/sounds/words. For example if they are kicking the ball, you could encourage them to kick it to you and begin a turn-taking game. Be sure to **comment** on their actions during play too.



# BLOCKS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Blocks/Bricks- these can be wooden or plastic. Choose blocks/bricks that are easy for your child to hold and manipulate.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Blocks/Bricks, Up, Down, Build, Crash, Tower, Big, Small, Off, On, Fall down.

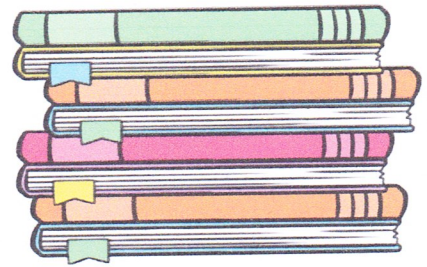
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Talk about what you/your child is doing in play with the blocks. Use simple words and phrases. Depending on your child's level, you may need to use single words to comment e.g. "blocks", "crash" (when the tower falls down).
  - General commenting: "building a tower", "big blocks"
  - When the tower falls/is knocked down: "all fall down", "crash", "uh oh!"
  - When building a tower: "blocks on", "lots of blocks", "big tower", "up, up, up".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said during play and add another word on so they hear how to make their sentences longer, for example, child: "block", adult: "big block". If your child uses two words, you repeat them and add a third, etc.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting, be sure to say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play, e.g. "build a tower", "build, build, build".
- **Pausing:**
  - Before giving your child the blocks, wait (show your child you're waiting for them to say something by having an excited look on your face). Your child is likely to communicate in some way that they want you to give them another block; they may use eye contact, a sound, a gesture or a word. Once they have shown that they want you to give them a block, you can **say the words** that your child needs, such as "block", "big block" etc.
  - When your child has built a tower, you could encourage them to knock it down by saying "ready, set, go!", you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch what your child is doing in play with the blocks, then copy their actions/sounds/words. For example if they are building a tower, you could build a tower with them or next to them. Be sure to **comment** on their actions during play too.



# BOOKS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any children's books, suitable for the age and stage of the child. Simple picture books, lift-the-flap books and those with repetitive phrases work well for this type of activity.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Book, Open, Turn, Page, Read/Reading, and any key words from the book.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Talk about the pictures in the book; name the pictures as you/your child points at them.
- **Commenting:** Make a simple comment while reading the book and looking at the pictures. For example:
  - If your child points at a dog, you could say "little doggy", or "happy dog" etc.
  - As you turn the page, you could say "turn" or "turn the page"
  - When your child gives you the book to read you could say "book" or "open".
- **Choices:** Offer your child a choice of two books and let your child choose a book that they want to read/look at.
- **Say it Again and Again:** Repeat the key words/names of the pictures over and over again. If your child is still engaged (paying attention/concentrating), you could read the same story again. Be sure to repeat the same simple phrases to help your child understand and use words.
- **Copy and Add:** If your child makes an attempt to name something from the book, repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their sentences longer, for example, child: "dog", adult: "dog's sleeping". If your child uses two words, you repeat them and add a third, etc.
- **Pausing:** If your child is familiar with the story, pause at the exciting/predictable parts, to see if they can fill in the gap, if they don't respond, you can just continue reading as normal.
- **Following their Lead:** Name/talk about the things that your child is looking/pointing at in the book. If they are turning more than one page at a time, this is fine as you can still comment on these actions (e.g. "turning the pages").



# BUBBLES

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- A bottle of bubbles with a wand.
- Paper towels/dry cloth so you can dry hands/surfaces.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Bubbles, Open, Blow, Go, Wow, Pop, Gone, More, Big, Small, Wet, Sticky, Dip, In, "Uh oh", Up, Down.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Naming/Commenting:

- Show your child the bottle of bubbles, say/sign "open" and/or "bubbles".
- When you dip the wand in, say "dip" or "dip in".
- Say "ready, set, go!" or "blow" when you blow the bubbles.
- Once you've blown the bubbles say "wow, bubbles", and "pop" as you pop the bubbles together.
- When the bubbles have gone you can say "gone!" or "all gone".
- If you have wet hands (from the bubble solution) you could show your child your hands and say "wet" or "sticky".
- When your child shows that they want you to blow the bubbles again, you can say "more bubbles" or just "bubbles".
- If you tried to blow bubbles and none came out, you could say "uh oh!"

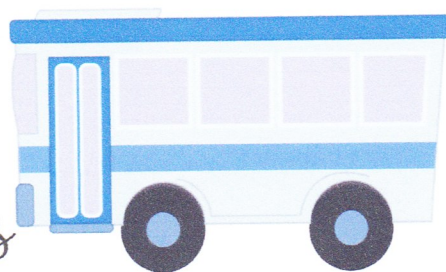
• **Communicative Temptations:** Bubbles are hard for young children to open and blow themselves, so they are an ideal communication temptation and can stimulate your child to make a request. After you have blown the bubbles, screw the lid on tight, give them back to your child and wait. Your child may attempt to open the bottle themselves, if they are unsuccessful they may hand the bubbles back to you for help; if so, they have just made a request. You can then **say the words** that your child needs, such as "open" or "bubbles".

• **Pausing:** Before blowing the bubbles, hold the wand up to your mouth and wait... your child is likely to communicate in some way that they want you to blow the bubbles. They may use eye contact, a sound, a gesture or a word. Once they have shown that they want you to blow the bubbles, you can **say the words** that your child needs, such as "blow", "go", "bubbles" etc. If you have said "ready, set, go!" you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it.

• **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting, be sure to say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play.



# TOY BUS



## Activity Ideas and Strategies

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Toy bus.
- People figures.
- Optional: car track/mat.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Bus, People, Girl/Lady, Boy/Man, Sit/Sit down, Stop, Go, Walk, On, Off, Push, Driving.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Naming/Commenting:

- Name the bus and people as your child explores them.
- Comment on your child's play, the people's actions, etc. For example, "lady walking", "on the bus", "push the bus" etc.
- Use symbolic noises (vehicle noises etc.) to accompany the commenting during play. For example if your child is pushing the bus, you could say "vroom", or "beep beep". Your child may attempt to copy these fun sounds before they begin to copy your words.

#### • Following their Lead:

- Watch what your child is doing in play and copy their actions. For example if your child is putting people onto the bus, you can comment on the actions e.g. "sitting down", "on the bus". You could pass your child people and name them, or you can put people onto the bus too. Be sure not to take over the play and just to follow what your child is doing already.
- If your child points at or vocalizes to indicate that they want something, look at where they are pointing and pass them the item, while saying a simple comment, e.g. "big bus". If there is more than one thing they may want, **offer them a choice** of the two items.

• **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "stop", "bus stopping", "stop, bus!"

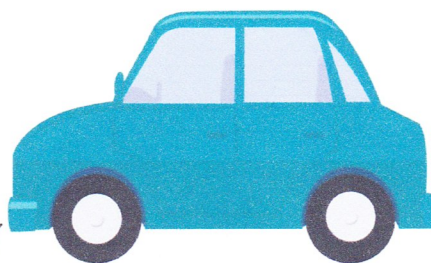
• **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example, child: "push", adult: "pushing the bus".

• **Gestures:** Use gestures to accompany comments, e.g. if your child is pushing the bus, you could do a 'push' hand gesture, or a 'driving' gesture when the bus is moving etc.



# TOY CARS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Toy cars, trains, trucks etc. Vehicles of varying size are good.
- Optional: A car garage, mat or track.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Car, Train, Truck, Stop, Go, Crash, Drive, Up, Down.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Naming/Commenting:

- Name the different vehicles as your child explores them.
- Comment on your child's play, for example "driving", "beep beep", "uh oh, car crashed" etc.
- Use symbolic noises (vehicle noises etc.) to accompany the commenting during play. For example if your child is pushing the car, you could say "vroom", or "beep beep". Your child may attempt to copy these fun sounds before they begin to copy your words.

#### • Pausing:

- Before pushing the car to your child, rock it back and forth a little and wait (show your child you're waiting for them to say something by having an excited look on your face). Your child is likely to communicate in some way that they want you to push the car to them; they may use eye contact, a sound, a gesture or a word. Once they have shown that they want you to push the car to them, you can **say the words** that your child needs, such as "push", "go", "car" etc.
- Before pushing the car you could say "ready, set, go!"; you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it.
- You could "drive" cars to your child and say "beep beep", keep pushing the car to your child, but pause to see if they will say "beep beep" or "go" etc.

• **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "car", "car stopping", "stop, car!", "uh oh, car crashed" etc.

• **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example, child: "push", adult: "pushing the car".

• **Gestures:** Use gestures to accompany comments, e.g. if your child is pushing the car, you could do a 'push' hand gesture, or a 'driving' gesture when the car is moving etc.



# DOCTOR'S KIT

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Child's doctor's kit.
- Teddy/doll/animals etc. to be patients, or it can be just you and your child.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Help, Sick, Hurt, Doctor, Happy, Sad, Body parts (head, arms, legs, feet, eyes, nose, mouth etc.), Hot, Cold, "Ow", "Uh oh", Teddy/Doll, and names of any familiar items in the doctor's kit (e.g. bandage).

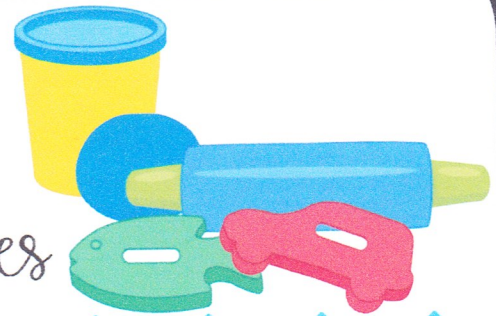
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on your child's play/actions with the doctor's kit. For example "teddy's leg hurts", "uh oh, poor teddy" or "sad dolly" etc.
- **Choices:**
  - When it is your turn to be the doctor, you can ask your child where teddy/dolly is hurt, e.g. "sore arm or leg?"
  - You can ask your child how they are feeling, e.g. "happy or sad?" or "hot or cold?"When your child has made a choice, repeat it back to them clearly in play.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "feet", "feet hurting", "rub feet better" etc.
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "sick", adult: "uh oh, teddy's sick".
- **Gestures:** Use gestures to accompany comments, e.g. if you are pretending that teddy has a sore leg, you can say "rub it better" and do a rubbing motion with your hands.
- **Communicative Temptations:** If the doctor's kit is hard to open, you can give the kit to your child without opening it. Your child may attempt to open the kit themselves; if they are unsuccessful they may hand the kit back to you for help; by doing so, they have just made a request. You can then **say the words** that your child needs, such as "open" or "help".



# DOUGH

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Dough- can be homemade or store-bought.
- Dough toys such as rolling pins, cutters, plastic knife (child-friendly).

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Dough, Roll, Press, Squash, Push, Sticky, Poke, Rip, Squeeze, Cut, Open.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on your child's actions etc. during play. For example:
  - When your child is pressing the dough: "press, press the dough".
  - If your child is rolling the dough into a ball: "you're making a ball" etc.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the dough. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is rolling the dough, you roll it too. At first, there's no need to try and show them how to build anything with the dough, but if you feel that the play is repetitive, you can show your child how to expand their play. For example if they have been rolling the dough into balls, you could build a snowman.
- **Communication Temptations:** If you are using store-bought dough, give your child the tub before opening it. These tubs are usually hard for young children to open, so they are an ideal communication temptation and can stimulate your child to make a request. Your child may attempt to open the tub themselves, if they are unsuccessful, they may hand the tub back to you for help; if so, they have just made a request. You can then **say the words** that your child needs, such as "open" or "dough".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "cutting", "cutting dough", "cut, cut, cut".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "open", adult: "open the dough".
- **Gestures:** Use gestures to accompany comments, e.g. if your child is rolling the dough you could move your hands back and forth in a rolling motion, while commenting.
- **Choices:** If you are using cutters, offer your child a choice of the cutter shape, to give the an opportunity to request/say something.



# TOY FOOD

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Play foods such as apple, banana, toast, milk, juice, cookie etc.
- Cup, Plate, Spoon etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

The names of the foods available, Cup, Plate, Spoon, Hot, Cold, Eat, Drink, Stir, Mix, Yummy.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions and your child's actions during play. For example:
  - When your child is making a drink: "pour the milk", "stir, stir, stir".
  - When your child gives you some food, you could say: "mmm, yummy banana".
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the food. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is cooking food, you can pretend that it's hot. If your child is cutting food, you could cut some too, etc.
- **Naming:** Name the items/foods that your child gives you or that they are playing with. You can use single words e.g. "banana" or a short phrase, e.g. "nice banana".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "stirring", "stirring tea", "stir, stir, stir".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "tea", adult: "hot tea".
- **Choices:** You can take turns making food for each other. When making food for your child, you can offer them a choice, e.g. "apple or banana?". Show your child the two choices as you say them. Your child may make a choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing, or using words. Repeat their choice back clearly, so they hear the words needed.
- **Reduce Questions:** Rather than asking your child "what have you made?", you can name the food/drink items that they have given you. Try to re-phrase any questions into a comment, e.g. instead of "have you made me a coffee?", you can say "you've made me a coffee".



# PUPPETS



## Activity Ideas and Strategies

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any hand puppets; it is useful if they have moveable mouths for this activity.
- Optional: Play foods such as apple, banana, toast, milk, juice, cookie etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Name of the puppet (e.g. dog, cat, monkey), Hi, Bye, Action words such as Wave, Walk, Eat, Sleep, Names of any additional items.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions, the puppet's actions, and your child's actions during play. For example:

- You could make the puppet eat some food: "he's eating", "[puppet name] is hungry"
- You could make the puppet sleep: "oh, [puppet name] is tired", "shhh he's sleeping"
- It may be easier for your child to copy sounds rather than real words, so you could model words such as "ahhh" if your child is stroking the puppet, "yay" if the puppet is happy, or a snoring sound if the puppet is sleeping; you could say "\*\*snore\*", [puppet name] is sleeping!"

- **Following their Lead:**

- Your child may be shy/uncertain around the puppet initially, so you could pretend that the puppet is shy too; engaging in a 'peek-a-boo' style game can often entertain young children.
- If your child shows they want to feed the puppet some food, you could make a comment such as "[puppet name] is so hungry!" or "[puppet name] loves bananas" etc.

- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's/the puppet's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "sleeping", "puppet sleeping", "sshhh, he's sleeping".

- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "eat", adult: "[puppet name]'s eating".



# PUZZLES

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- A simple inset/peg puzzle with a theme/category (e.g. food, animals, transport), is good for this activity.

*Avoid puzzles that focus on ABCs, numbers, colors or shapes. It is better to focus on puzzles that help expand your child's general vocabulary, rather than "academic" vocabulary at this stage.*

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

The names of the puzzle pieces, All done, In, Out, Turn, Put, Fit.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Name the puzzle pieces that your child gives you or that they are putting into the puzzle. You can use single words e.g. "teddy" or a short phrase, e.g. "fluffy teddy".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming the puzzle pieces, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "ball", "little ball", "put the ball in" etc.
- **Copy and Add:** If your child names a puzzle piece, repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "ball", adult: "little ball".
- **Choices:** Let your child make a choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing or using words. When your child has made their choice, repeat it to them clearly.  
For example:
  - If you have more than one puzzle, you can offer your child a choice, e.g. "animals or toys".
  - At the start of the activity you could take all of the puzzle pieces and offer your child a choice of two pieces at a time as they complete the puzzle. Remember to show your child the choices as you offer them, e.g. hold up each piece as you name it.
- **Pausing:** After you have named the puzzle pieces a few times, you can begin pausing when you pick up a piece, for example "I have a...", to see if your child will fill in the gap. If your child does not respond, you can say the name of the puzzle piece.

***Remember:** There is no need for your child to complete the puzzle if they are finding it difficult. If it is a new puzzle you can try taking just a few pieces out (so the puzzle is almost complete), then each time you use that puzzle take a few extra pieces out until eventually all the pieces have been removed.*



# SONGS & RHYMES

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any nursery rhyme/familiar song, such as 'Twinkle Twinkle', and 'Row your boat'. If you do not know any suitable rhymes, ask your child's Speech Therapist for ideas.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Any of the key words from the rhyme/song.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Choices:** Offer your child a choice of nursery rhymes, let your child make a choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing or using words. When your child has made their choice, repeat it to them clearly.
- **Pausing:**
  - When your child is familiar with singing the nursery rhymes, try pausing before the key words/fun part; your child may fill in the gap. For example "twinkle, twinkle little...".
  - When you have finished singing the nursery rhymes, wait for your child to request for you to sing again.
- **Gestures:** Use simple gestures/actions to accompany key words in the song (if you do not know them, ask your child's Speech Therapist or you can check videos online).
- **Say it Again and Again:** Children's nursery rhymes/songs are typically repetitive. They're a fun and engaging way for your child to hear the same words over and over again, while you are doing the relevant actions/gestures and singing the song.

### Suitable Songs/Rhymes:

- If You're Happy and You Know It
- Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
- Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
- Row Your Boat
- I'm a Little Teapot



# TEA SET



## Activity Ideas and Strategies

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Child's tea set- cups, plates, spoons, teapot, jug etc.
- Optional: play food such as cookies, fruit, cake etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Cup, Plate, Spoon, Tea, Coffee, Milk, Pour, Drink, Stir, Hot, Cold, More.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions and your child's actions etc. during play. For example:
  - When your child is making a drink: "pour the milk", "stir, stir, stir".
  - When your child gives you some food, you could say: "mmm, yummy banana".
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the tea set. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is pouring coffee, you can pretend that it's hot. If your child is stirring tea, you could stir yours too, etc.
- **Naming:** Name the items/foods that your child gives you or that they are playing with. You can use single words e.g. "milk" or a short phrase, e.g. "cold milk".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "stirring", "stirring tea", "stir, stir, stir".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "tea", adult: "hot tea".
- **Choices:** You can take turns making a drink for each other. When making a drink for your child, you can offer them a choice, e.g. "tea or coffee?". Show your child the two choices as you say them. Your child may make a choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing, or using words. Repeat their choice back clearly, so they hear the words needed.
- **Reduce Questions:** Rather than asking your child "what have you made?", you can name the food/drink items that they have given you. Try to re-phrase any questions into a comment, e.g. instead of "have you made me a coffee?", you can say "you've made me a coffee".



# TEDDY / DOLLS



## Activity Ideas and Strategies

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Teddy and/or doll (one with moveable parts is good for this activity).
- Things to care for teddy/doll, such as bowl, spoon, cup, brush, cloth, blanket.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Teddy/Doll, Names of any care items, Eat, Sleep, Drink, Wash, Brush, Body parts.

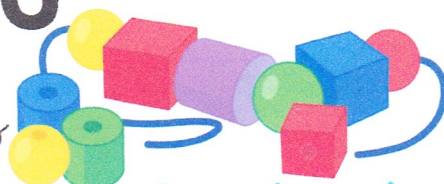
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Name the things that your child is looking at, playing with, giving you etc. Name the care items, body parts, etc. as your child is playing with them.
- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions and your child's actions etc. during play. For example "hugging the teddy", "brushing teddy", "dolly eating" etc.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the teddy/doll. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is putting a blanket on the teddy, you can continue the play routine for bedtime and comment on this, e.g. "teddy is tired", "put teddy in bed", "put the blanket on", "night, night teddy".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "teddy is sleeping", "sleepy teddy", "sshhh, sleeping".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "teddy", adult: "teddy sleeping".
- **Choices:** You can take turns looking after the teddy, offer choices about what you should do, e.g. "shall we wash or feed teddy?" or "wash teddy's feet or hands?".
- **Reduce Questions:** Try to balance your questions and comments. For example, rather than asking "what's teddy doing?", tell your child what is happening.



# THREADING BEADS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Threading beads.
- String.
- A tub/box with a lockable lid to keep the beads in.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Beads, String, Open, On, Help, More.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Communicative Temptations:

- Put all of the beads in a lockable or hard to open tub/box; this is an ideal communicative temptation and can stimulate your child to make a request. Give your child the tub of beads. Your child may attempt to open the tub themselves, if they are unsuccessful, they may hand the tub back to you for help; if so, they have just made a request. You can then **say the words** that your child needs, such as "open" or "beads".
- You take the beads and wait for your child to make a request for more beads (this may be a gesture, vocalization or word). When your child has made a request, you can say the words such as "beads" or "more beads" etc.

• **Say it Again and Again:** While your child is threading the beads onto the string, you can say "on" or "beads on". Repeat this each time a bead is threaded onto the string.

• **Choices:** Let your child make a choice by pointing, taking, vocalizing, or using words. When your child has made their choice, repeat it to them clearly. For example if you have different sizes of beads, you could offer your child a choice, e.g. "big bead or small bead?"



# TOOL KIT

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Child's toy tool kit (hammer, spanner, screwdriver etc.).
- Optional: things to fix, e.g. toy cars, furniture etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Fix, Tools (including the name of any tools), Hit, Bang, Turn, In, Out, Cut, Make, Mend, Build, Break/Broken,

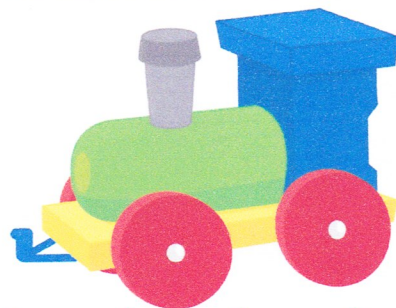
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Name the things that your child is looking at, playing with, giving you etc. while playing with the tools.
- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions and your child's actions etc. during play. For example "uh oh, it's broken", "let's fix it", "bang, bang, bang". You can also use symbolic noises during play; make noises for the different tools, for example "bang, bang, bang" for the hammer, or a "whizz" noise for a drill.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the tools. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is pretending to fix something, you can get a tool and help them fix it, and say "let's fix it", "use the hammer" etc.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "bang, bang, bang" when they are using the hammer.
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "broken", adult: "uh oh, car's broken".
- **Reduce Questions:** Try to balance your questions and comments. For example, rather than asking "what's that?" or "what are you doing?", tell your child what is happening/what they have, e.g. "you're hammering... bang, bang, bang".



# TRAIN SET

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Toy trains.
- Train track.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Train, Track, Stop, Go, "Choo Choo", "Chugga Chugga", Push, Fast, Slow.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

#### • Naming/Commenting:

- Name the different trains as your child explores them (e.g. "train" or "big train").
- Comment on your child's play, for example "pushing train", "fast train", "the train's stopped" etc.
- Use symbolic noises (vehicle noises etc.) to accompany the commenting during play. For example if your child is pushing the train, you could say "choo, choo", or "chugga, chugga". Your child may attempt to copy these fun sounds before they begin to copy your words.

#### • Pausing:

- Before pushing the train to your child, rock it back and forth a little and wait (show your child you're waiting for them to say something by having an excited look on your face). Your child is likely to communicate in some way that they want you to push the train to them; they may use eye contact, a sound, a gesture or a word. Once they have shown that they want you to push the train to them, you can **say the words** that your child needs, such as "push", "go", "train" etc.
- Before pushing the train you could say "ready, set, go!"; you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it.
- You could push the train to your child and say "choo, choo", keep pushing the train to your child, but pause to see if they will say "choo, choo" or "go" etc.

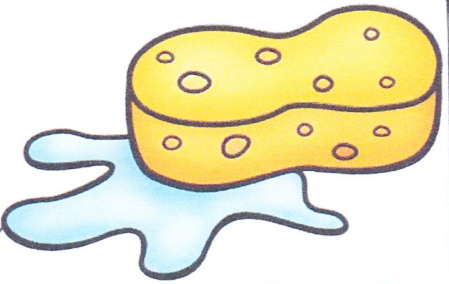
• **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "train", "train's stopping", "stop, train!" etc.

• **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "push", adult: "pushing the train".



# WATER PLAY

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- A large tub for water (the bath is also suitable).
- Bath toys, such as watering can, jug, sponge, cloth, cups, etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Water, Splash, Wet, Drip, Pour, Wash, Squeeze, and the names of any toys you have to play with.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Name the things that your child is looking at, playing with, giving you etc. while playing with the toys in the water.
- **Commenting:** Comment on your actions and your child's actions and play. For example "pouring the water", "my hands are wet", "splash, splash, splash", "squeeze" when you wring out the cloth.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the water toys. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is pouring water from a jug into the tub, you can continue the play and add relevant comments, such as "pour, pour, pour" or "fill it up" etc.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "splash!", "splash the water", "splash, splash, splash".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "water", adult: "splashing water".
- **Reduce Questions:** Try to balance your questions and comments. For example, rather than asking "what are you doing?", tell your child what they are doing with the water toys.
- **Gestures:** Use simple actions/gestures to support the words you're saying. For example if your child is pouring water, you can do a pouring motion with your hand (as if you're holding a jug in your hand). If your child is squeezing the sponge, you could press your hands together to show 'squeezing'.



# WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- A bag or pillowcase.
- Familiar objects such as toy car, cup, toy food, animals etc.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Open, Bag, and any of the names for the objects in the bag, My turn, Your turn, Look, Wow.

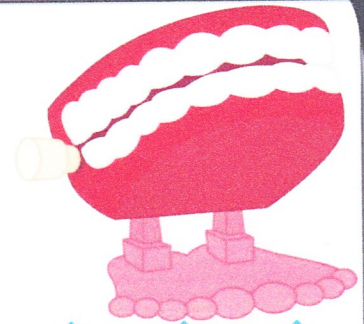
### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Naming:** Take it in turns to take things out of the bag; name the things that you or your child have taken out of the bag. Allow your child to play with the items, or show them how to use/play with them, and name the items a few times during this play.
- **Pausing:**
  - Wait for your child to show that they want the activity to continue before taking other items out of the bag. Shake the bag and look expectantly at them to prompt them to say/gesture something that shows you they want the activity to continue.
  - Hold the item up to your child as you take it out of the bag, pause briefly to see if your child names the item. If they don't, you can name it for them.
- **Commenting:** As your child is playing with the toys from the bag, you can comment on their play. For example "pushing the car", "hello dolly", or "brush, brush, brush" etc.
- **Following their Lead:** Watch your child's actions/play with the toys from the bag. Comment on, and copy, their actions/play. For example, if your child is pretending to brush their hair, you can continue the play and add relevant comments, such as "brushing hair", "nice hair", "my turn" and get the child to brush your hair, etc.
- **Say it Again and Again:** While naming/commenting on your child's play, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "brushing hair", "brush, brush, brush", "brush your hair" etc.
- **Copy and Add:** If your child names an item from the bag, or names something during play, you can repeat what your child has said and add another word on, so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "teddy", adult: "teddy sleeping".
- **Reduce Questions:** Try to balance your questions and comments. For example, rather than asking "what's this?", tell your child what they have taken from the bag.



# WIND-UP TOYS

## Activity Ideas and Strategies



### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any wind-up toys (have just a few at a time).
- A tub/box to put them in.

### SUGGESTED TARGET WORDS:

Turn, Toy, Name of any wind-up toys, My Turn, Your Turn, Stop, Go, Again, Wow, Help.

### IDEAS/STRATEGIES:

- **Commenting:** Comment on the actions that the wind-up toy does, and comment your child's response to it.
  - For example if the toy jumps, you could say "jump, jump, jump" or "hopping". If the wind-up toy spins, you could say "spinning around".
  - When you turn the key to wind-up the toy, you could say "turn, turn, turn" or "wind it up".
  - If your child is visibly enjoying themselves, you can say "this is fun" or "you're having fun".
- **Say it Again and Again:** While commenting on your child's play/the actions of the wind-up toy, say the words again and again, so your child hears multiple repetitions of the words during play. For example "hop, hop, hop".
- **Copy and Add:** Repeat what your child has said and add another word on so they hear how to make their attempts at talking longer, for example child: "jump", adult: "monkey jumping".
- **Choices:** If you have more than one wind-up toy, you can offer a choice of toys, e.g. "teeth or monkey?". When your child has made a choice (this may be via pointing, taking, vocalizing, or using a word), you can repeat their choice back clearly.
- **Reduce Questions:** Try to balance your questions and comments. For example, rather than asking "what's it doing?", tell your child what the toy is doing.
- **Communicative Temptations:** Wind-up toys are an ideal motivator because they are very fun, but hard to use! Give your child the wind-up toy; if they are unsuccessful in winding it up, wait for them to communicate in some way that they need your help. Your child may pass you the toy, vocalize, or move your hand towards the toy. If they do this, you can model the target words, such as "help" or "turn it" etc.
- **Pausing:** When you have wound up the toy, hold onto it; you could say "ready, set, go!"; you can pause before you say "go" to see if your child will say it. If not, you can say "go" and let the toy go.