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Talk With Me
Early Language Services

ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE EVERY DAY (3-5 YEARS)

Categorizing

Grouping Similar Things Together

Sorting helps children understand how some things are alike and different. Once items are sorted, count to see what group has the most or fewest items.

- **Sort toys:** With a bin of mixed up toys, take turns sorting items into groups or categories like play food, clothes, vehicles, animals, action figures, etc. After the initial sorting, look to see if further sorting can happen:
 - Food – fruits/vegetables
 - Vehicles - cars/trucks
 - Animal – farm (cow, pig)/wild animals (deer, moose)
- **Ideas for items to sort by color:**
 - Beads/Buttons, Legos/Duplos, Laundry
- **Sort books into two piles:** softcover or hardcover
- **Sort by size:**
 - Buttons, Sort towels, dishcloths and washcloths, Clothing (baby, child, adult), Balls, Rocks and Leaves

Books and Stories

- Start with the title. Ask your child what the story might be about.
- Be creative. Change the endings for a different twist.
- Retell favourite stories or make up your own stories while in the car, waiting for appointments or at bedtime.
- Act out stories while playing or with puppets.

Rhyming

Talking about rhyming helps children realize that some words sound the same.

- While **singing and saying nursery rhymes**, **point out the words that rhyme**. You can also try songs like “One, Two, Buckles My Shoe” and “Hey Diddle Diddle”.
- **Try leaving out the last word for your child to fill in.** Many familiar songs rhyme, such as:
 - 5 little Monkeys: bed, head, and said
 - Twinkle twinkles: star/are, high/sky
 - Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes: toes/nose
- **Sing songs that let you make up rhymes**, for example “Down By The Bay” is a great song that let your child think of animals and words that rhyme with it:

*Down by the bay, where the watermelons grow.
Back to my home, I dare not go. For if I do, my
mother will say: "Did you ever you ever see a
goose kissing a moose?" Down by the bay.*

- **Rhyming Games:**
 - Play “I spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with...” (example: *mat* and *cat*).
 - See how many rhyming words you can come up with, both real and nonsense words — “and, hand, band, fand, jand”. Can they come up with funny words (or real words) that rhyme with their name?
- **Read rhyming books:** Comment on rhymes when they happen. “Hey, rat and fat. Those words rhyme. They sound the same at the end”.

Word Games

- **Write down your child's name and let them decorate it.**
- **What is a "word"?:** Cut up large printed words from newspaper headlines or magazines to make a word collage.
- **Point out some of the words during their day:**
 - On the cereal box
 - On their clothing
 - On their lunchbox
 - Their name
 - In their environments (ex: stop signs)
- **Learn about syllables by breaking up words into their parts.** Clap/hop or stomp out the names to everyone in the family: Er-ic, Bran-don, Sa-man-tha, Josh.
- **Staple a few pieces of paper together and encourage your child to write a book.** Resist the urge to write for them, instead encourage them to "write" however they can. This may look like scribbles or random letters but that is ok!

Play

Let your child lead the play by assigning roles, choosing the events. Try acting out:

- Things that you do every day (eating breakfast/lunch/diner, dressing, caring for baby, going to the grocery store).
- Activities that may be less frequent (visiting the doctor, taking a trip, going to a movie, visiting a park).
- Things you haven't done yet (going to the zoo, being an Astronaut).
- Model different voices for different characters.
- While playing, act out different feelings.
- Practice taking turns and asking for a turn when you play games.
- Predict what could happen next.. When playing with blocks or making paint.

Sound and Letter Games

Knowing that words can be broken down in to smaller parts (syllables and sounds) will help your child with reading and spelling success at school. Here are some ways to get your child to notice sounds and letters.

- **Alphabet books:** Help your child learn letter names and the sounds they make.
- **Help your child learn the letters that are in his/her name.**
- **Find a toy or small object that starts with a certain sound;** group together in bins or containers marked with the letter or letters ("sh": shell, ship, sugar).
- **Play "I spy with my little eye, something that starts with..."** (example: sssss...)
- **Help your child recognize first sounds** by making up silly sentences with words that all start with the same sound. Use your child's name: *Joe jiggles jelly in the jazzy jeep.*
- **Play "The Suitcase Game":** Pretend to go on a trip and pack all the things you need that start with the sound _____. Use real objects or toys, or use this game without the props during a car ride or while walking or playing.

Sequencing

Practice doing steps in an order.

- **Make a craft that has a few steps:** Talk about what needs to be done first, second or next, and last. Have your child retell the steps when finished.
- **Cook/bake together:** Talk about the many steps in the recipe. Talk about what needs to be done first, second or next, and last. Draw or write the steps on cards or pieces of paper. When finished, mix up the steps and have your child put back in order while telling what they did.