

Resources for reinforcing speech and language skills at home

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The following is a list of simple and fun activities you can work into your daily routines to encourage and facilitate good language habits. You can also address your child's speech sounds during any activity.

- **Sidewalk chalk**- imitating, vocabulary, labeling
- **Riding bikes**- stop/go, fast/slow, following directions
- **Playing ball**- taking turns, verbs, pronouns (my/your)
- **Arts and crafts**- requesting, following directions, sequencing
- **Going for a walk**- vocabulary, labeling, asking and answering questions, colors
- **Playing a game**- following rules, taking turns, good sportsmanship
- **Playing with simple toys (puzzles, cars, blocks, Playdoh)**- requesting, commenting, appropriate play with objects, following directions, basic concepts, sitting and attending
- **Pretend play (cooking, eating at a restaurant, grocery store, doctor's office)**- using imagination, pretending, taking turns
- **READING BOOKS!**- pointing to and naming pictures, asking and answering questions, sitting and attending
- **Blowing bubbles**- requesting, up/down, big/little, taking turns
- **Scavenger hunt**- vocabulary, labeling, following directions
- **Playground (swing, slide)**- requesting, fast/slow, stop/go
- **Meal times**- descriptive words, manners, requesting, sequencing
- **Bathroom**- body parts, sequencing, following directions, object functions
- **Bedroom**- categories (clothes, furniture, toys), object functions
- **Riding in the car**- colors, vehicles, labeling, community helpers, weather

From speechbuddy.com

4 Tips and Tricks for Speech Therapy at Home

Encourage conversation: Have regular storytelling sessions with your child. Instead of asking him a Yes or No question, think about asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions such as, "What would you do if you saw a great big cow in your backyard?" By asking questions that elicit a detailed response, you are encouraging your child to express his or her ideas without the fear of being right or wrong.

Listen, Listen, Listen: carefully. Remember that childhood game of telephone? Turns out, telephone is an excellent way to teach your child to listen to your words and relate them to another person. If you cannot remember the game, here is how you play. Have your child and friends or siblings get into a circle. One person whispers a word to the other and that person whispers that word to the next person. The goal of telephone is to end up with the same ending phrase as the starting phrase. When you children are talking to you, offer thoughtful responses so

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that you validate children's language, as well as their ideas and feelings. They want to feel like they are being heard (don't we all)?

Reading: Reading is one of the most important things you can do with your child. Ask questions about the pictures, ask your child to point to items on each page and for older children, you may ask your child to think of experiences he or she may have had that are similar. All these help your child make connections with what he or she is hearing. You may find that your child wants to read the same book time and time again. Hearing the same story over and over helps foster familiarity and security, while building language skills at the same time.

Make it FUN: Toddlers learn best when the experience is fun and interactive. Your child will not respond as well if he or she feels like the activities are "homework." Instead, make each session of your speech therapy something your child will look forward to and will want to actively participate.

From slptelle.com

8 Tips for At Home Speech Therapy Practice

1. The Power of Play

The power and value of play in a child's speech development can never be overlooked. While they are playing with toys and games, take the time to sit with them and model how the toy is used while using an animated voice to highlight its different parts.

2. The Power of Words

Your daily interactions with your child are absolutely important to their growth. Make sure to talk clearly, appropriately model any words they may be having problems with, and use visual cues to help them in their understanding. Clear, simple, and consistent speech is the way to go. Also, make sure to give them some time to respond.

3. Let Your Child Speak For Themselves

Rather than limiting your child's opportunity to express their needs, provide them the opportunity to speak for themselves. Instead of asking, "Do you want this or that," let them use their own words to let you know what they want/need.

4. Active Listening

As a parent, it can be very easy to get caught up in the hoopla of the day and not have a full conversation with your child. Instead, show them that you are being an active listener by asking them questions that relate to the conversation they are having with you. Also, make sure to give them the opportunity to talk about things that interest them.

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5. Read, Read, and Read Some More

Reading is an essential element of speech and language development. It's never too early to start reading to your child. Start off with simple books that repeat words and phrases (rhyming is great for speech development). Even reading the same book over and over can help them exercise their language skills.

As they grow, offer them more "challenging" books that require them to answer simple questions that go beyond just yes and no answers. You can also make the readings as dramatic or whimsical as possible. Make loud dramatic sounds to grab their attention.

6. Fun Time with Flash Cards

There are plenty of free flashcards that you can find online or purchase that can provide children with plenty of practice. Focus on flashcards that have sounds they may have difficulty with. To really draw your child in, consider adding some type of reward for getting a certain amount of sounds/words correct.

7. Mirror, Mirror On the Wall

Modeling is an important piece of any speech therapy program and parents can get in on the fun by helping their children learn how to properly pronounce by using a mirror. Choose a few words that are challenging them and demonstrate by moving your mouth slowly as you say the word to say them. Then, let your child speak in front of a mirror so they can see how to move their mouth to make certain sounds.

Get silly and include plenty of onomatopoeias like buzz, moo, roar, and meow.

8. Sing Along

Children love to sing and allowing them to belt out their favorite (parent approved) hits can encourage them to learn new words, practice active listening and memory, and improve their ability to express themselves verbally.

Articulation

Here are some suggested speech activities to try at home after your child has begun therapy:

1. If your child is working on a specific sound, help him/her to become aware of that sound by pointing out things in the environment that contain the sound. You can do this in a number of ways:

- a. Go on a "Sound Walk". Hunt for things in or outside of the house that have the child's speech sound.
- b. Look through magazines for pictures or words that have his/her speech sound.
- c. When driving, look for things with the child's sound.

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d. Play 20 questions. Think of a word or object that has the child's speech sound. Have the child ask questions to figure out what the object is. If that is too difficult, give the child clues and have him/her guess.

2. Once your child can say the sound correctly in words, have him/her practice saying some of those words for you. When that becomes easy, have him/her say them in sentences.

a. Spelling Search- Have the child search his/her spelling list for words that have his/her sound. Say them aloud.

b. Silly Sentences- See who can make up the silliest sentence using one of your child's speech words.

c. Challenge Sentences- See who can make up the sentence using the most words containing the speech sound.

d. Tongue Twisters- Do you know a tongue twister that has your child's speech sound? Can you and your child make some up?

3. When your child is able to say his/her speech sound in words and sentences, have him/her begin to practice reading aloud using the sound correctly. For beginning readers, have the child read from his/her reading book or from story books. Try using poems, the Sunday Funnies, Comic Books, cereal boxes, signs, TV guide, video or board game instructions, or anything your child enjoys reading.

4. Begin to encourage your child to use the sound correctly for short periods of time during the day. This is called "carryover". Can your child carryover good speech every time he/she says his/her sibling's name? His/Her pet's name? His/her favorite food?

5. Once your child is able to use good speech for longer periods of time, try these conversational activities.

a. Make a phone call using good speech.

b. Use good speech all during supper.

c. Use good speech in the car on the way to practice, lessons, or school.

d. Use good speech while going over homework.

Language

Games, Ideas, and books to encourage language skills:

Enrich vocabulary with language-based games such as I spy, Guess Who, 20 Questions, Memory, and Apples to Apples.

Books:

a. Read a variety of books

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- b. Label or point to pictures on the page
- c. Have your child describe what is happening on each page.
- d. Ask various WH questions (who, what, when, where, why, how do you know) about what is happening on the picture page and what may happen next.
- e. Sequence or retell the story with beginning, middle, and end

Have fun conversations! For example, at dinner, discuss everything from daily events to what's in each room of the house. Conversational skills, such as continuation of the topic and turn taking are essential parts of speech and language.

Know your child's learning strengths and weaknesses. There are many forms of intelligence, including linguistic, kinesthetic [body], musical, artistic, logical, and social. Use your child's strong areas to help speech and language develop. For example, if you child is gifted musically, let him/her sing a song to practice speech sounds.

Play verbal games, such as:

- a. Guess What (Guess what has sharp teeth and orange/black stripes?)
- b. Yes or No ("Dogs have 2 feet", child says "no")
- c. Which One Doesn't Belong and Why? ("apple, milk, banana")
- d. Categories: "sock, shirt, pants" (child says "clothes")
- e. Categories: Parent says "clothes", child says "socks, pants, shirts"
- f. "Hotter/Colder": hide something and guide with clues
- g. I Spy
- h. Play "Simon Says". Start out by being "Simon", giving directions like "touch your nose", "touch the floor", "clap your hands", "walk to the door" and work up to harder ones like "touch your knees and clap your hands", "put a jelly bean under the napkin," etc. Next, have your child be "Simon" and help him to give the directions if needed.

In early elementary grades K-2

- Talk with your child frequently
- Read a variety of books; read often and talk with your child about the story
- Help your child focus on sound patterns of words such as those found in rhyming games
- Have your child retell stories and talk about events of the day
- Talk with your child during daily activities; give directions for your child to follow (e.g., making cookies)
- Talk about how things are alike and different
- Give your child reasons and opportunities to write

In later elementary grades 3-5

- Continue to encourage reading; find reading material that is of interest to your child
- Encourage your child to form opinions about what he or she hears or reads and relate what is read to experiences

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- Help your child make connections between what is read and heard at school, at home, and in other daily activities
- Talk aloud as you help your child understand and solve problems encountered in reading material
- Help your child recognize spelling patterns, such as beginnings and endings of words (e.g., *pre-* or *-ment*)
- Encourage your child to write letters, keep a diary, or write stories
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Activities to promote Listening skills

(Taken from *What is Auditory Processing?* By Susan Bell and *The Source for Processing Disorders* by Gail J. Richard, PhD (2001))

- Use family trips and errands as a way for children to listen and learn. For example, on a trip to the supermarket, tell your child 3 or 4 items you need, then ask for them to be repeated or brought to you.
- To help with memory, break information into shorter "chunks" or segments, and pause between each segment. For example: "Put on your pajamas (pause), and wash your face (pause). Chunking spoken messages allows children more time to process or absorb the entire message.
- Get children's attention before you speak to them. Cue them to "tune in" by saying, "Susie, this is important..." or "Ryan, listen carefully-I'm going to tell you what to do." Vary the attention-getting phrases so the child doesn't begin to tune them out as well.
- Supplement what you say with something s/he can see, when this is possible. If you're asking him/her to go to the table and get the backpack, you can also point to the backpack.
- Allow your child "thinking time" before you expect an answer to a question. The typical amount of time we expect between a question and an answer is 2-4 seconds. A rule of thumb is to count to 10 before you help answer a question. This is hard to do, but it's probably the single most important strategy you can use.
- Feel free to repeat, rephrase or further explain what you've said to your child if you think it will help him/her understand (you should still give him plenty of time to respond).

From: http://www.speechtx.com/language/teen_and_adult_activities.htm

1. Have a set of cards, on each of which is written an idea which the student must talk about for 30 seconds. Examples of ideas: Explain to your parents why you didn't home at the agreed-upon time; Pretend you are a weather forecaster and give the weather forecast; You are new to your class/place of work, and you must introduce yourself and tell a bit about yourself; It's important to donate to charitable causes - do you agree?
2. The student writes a short play, containing two characters, which is then acted out by the therapist and student together. Depending on the cognitive level of the client, stick figures or puppets may be used to enhance interest and understanding.

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3. The student phones the therapist at an agreed-upon time and discusses an agreed-upon topic.
4. The student describes and draws simple pictures depicting the sequence of his/her day.
5. The student answers "What If..." questions. Examples: What would you do if you found a hundred-dollar bill in a park? What would you do if you saw a young child, standing alone, crying in a public area?
6. The student and therapist work together on publishing a newspaper. They must decide what kind of articles/items are to be included and who the publication is geared for.
7. To increase their vocabulary set up a Jeopardy type game with their vocabulary words. This also helps them to form Wh questions as you pose the answer and they have to come up with the question. This also targets curriculum in the schools and can be used in any of their subjects to study for exams. The easier words get lesser points. When studying for exams you can put the words in different categories and give them catchy names to help them remember them.
8. Mad Libs. First, we review parts of speech. What is a noun, verb, adjective and adverb? Then we brainstorm words for each category and either write them on the chalkboard or on paper to be kept in front of each student. Then we do the madlib, either from the madlib books or online ones. (Wacky Web Tales is a good site for this.) After we read the silly mad lib then we go back and look for words that make sense within the story chosen. For additional links, go to www.madlibs.org
9. The newspaper is great. The comic strips have idioms, figurative language, and multiple meaning words. Humor is difficult to teach, but usually appropriate goal for this age group. The classified ads help memory and analyzing information. Omit one piece of crucial info: phone number, price, etc. Let them decide which info is missing. Job ads give good info and help them for the future. I have a file of comic strips which are useful for teaching. Soon, the students begin to bring in samples. Advertisements are also good for fact/fiction work.
10. I cut out pictures of groups (2+people) from magazines (the NY Times Sunday Magazine section is excellent) and mount them on cardstock. Each person in the therapy group chooses a picture and rolls the die/dice. The object is to role-play the conversation of the people in the picture. The number on the die/dice is the number of conversational turns that the student must role-play. In individual therapy sessions, the student and I each role-play a pictured person. In group speech, each student plays a role and I facilitate when needed. It's a terrific pragmatic lesson that the students love!

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11. An activity that has gone over in a big way with middle school age boys with Asperger's has been to use the Far Side calendar. We do this the last five minute of the session. I save pages from each day and ask each student to tell the rest of us why it is funny. This activity addresses a variety of objectives from multiple meaning words, idioms and inference. It also requires them to pay attention to the details in the picture along with the captions. They can't wait to do this!
12. When working with adult students who have suffered strokes and have decreased intelligibility, I like to get the names of their children and grandchildren. Names are great to use for articulation practice and the students appreciate being able to talk about their families.
13. Many of the teens I work with need help with figurative language. I introduce a list of idioms and help them come up with correct "definitions". Once the list is completed, we make a matching game by writing the idiom phrase on one index card and the definition on another. The students make the cards themselves to get additional spelling and grammar practice. You can use the cards to play Memory or other card games. If I'm working with a group, I have each student make their own set to take home.
14. I have my older students list jobs that they might be interested in doing once completing school. We look through the newspaper and pick a job out of the classifieds. I have them read it and discuss the vocabulary. We then fill out a generic job application discussing the vocabulary and role play an interview. Great for articulation, language, fluency, and functional life skills.
15. I like to play "Finish It", a group activity that involves adults with high level expressive language deficits. The clinician begins by presenting a topic and saying a few sentences to begin a story. Going around the group, each person adds his/her part to the story. The story can be long or short, but each person's contribution must be relevant to the topic and in proper sequence. This activity can be used with people with dysarthria to practice speech clarity; for those with sequencing or thought organization goals; and as mentioned, for those with expressive language goals. The clinician encourages appropriate responses by asking for clarification, expansion of ideas, etc.; whatever the particular goal. I have also found this activity successful and fun for the young adult population.
16. When I was a therapist working with kids in Juvenile Hall, one of the most successful activities we ever did was preparing for job hunting. I picked up applications from places like McDonalds and the gas station, grocery stores, etc. and brought in help wanted ads from the local paper. Often with teens, their job expectations are unreasonable (I want to be a painter, mechanic, so on) and they have little to no experience. Teaching them how to read help wanted ads and discovering which jobs they were or were not qualified for helped them define a direction for their lives, i.e., finish high school, volunteer, junior college, etc. We also spent a lot of time completing applications - real life ones, not the ones in

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some workbook. The materials were free and the reasoning and problem-solving skills needed were addressed daily!

17. This is a game that I made and works well with young children and adolescence. I have used it both for sentence expansion and for teaching 'w' questions. Using Boardmaker or a similar program I place a big picture at the top of the page and then four things that relate to it in smaller boxes (horizontally) underneath. e.g. I may put a picture of a teapot and then underneath a cup of tea, people, kitchen and thirsty. We then take it in turns to choose a card and for the other person/people to ask us questions to try and guess what it is a picture of.
e.g. where do you find it? ... In the kitchen
who uses it? ... all people can use it
when do you use it? ... when you are thirsty
what do you use it for? ... to make a cup of tea.

The prompts are there to help the child to answer the questions. Or alternatively they could think up different or more significant answers depending on their ability level.

18. While in graduate school I worked with an adolescent language group. The group's long-term goals were to increase verbal and written expression as well as direction-following skills. The goals were addressed by performing various language activities. Here are a few of the fun things we did! One week we practiced note-taking skills for taking notes in the classroom, we generated ideas as a group and then had the teens give short "presentations" during therapy time and had the others in the group take notes. We also had a week where we worked on map-reading skills. After looking at maps of our city and going over the components of the map we went on a tour outside around the speech building...we gave the teens a map and had them follow the directions to get to a destination (they ended up at a drug store and they were instructed to buy a soda! It was fun!) We increased direction-following by having the teens fold cloth napkins and paper from written directions, we had them write out their own directions and we had to fold napkins their way.

During the time the group met we also had a session on completing job applications and using a dictionary.

19. Utilizing travel brochures/magazines clients can "plan" a vacation. What type of transportation might be needed? How do you access that transportation? What types of clothing would be needed for the destination? If it is a driving trip, sequence the travel using maps? What types of activities would be available at your destination? Help TBI/CVA students with word finding by asking questions such as: If you get tired traveling, where do you stop? If you get hungry, where do you stop?
20. When working with a teenager with multiple language problems & a severe learning disability I found using visual aids really helped. To work on

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receptive vocabulary & descriptive terms, I would cut out various pictures from magazines and put them on the wall behind me. I would have her face the wall and I would give her clues as to what object I was thinking of. Kind of an "I spy" game for older kids. I would cue and prompt when needed. Before we played this game, we would review different descriptive concepts and the vocabulary that was involved. Every time she picked the right picture, she took it off the wall and placed it in a notebook, to be used for future activities, such as formulating sentences or categorization activities. This game is great for multiple language concepts such as asking WH questions about the object.

21. I created this activity during my last clinical practicum site for graduate school. I was working with the geriatric population and I had a small group of women with similar language problems (aphasia & memory problems) and also with dysarthric speech. I would pick a theme for each session. For instance, we had a "Get Together" where the students and I planned our activities for a "girl's night" get together. The student had to pick what kind of food they wanted, what music they wanted to listen to and what they wanted to watch on TV. I used various menus & a TV guide. I blew up the pages of the TV guide & the menus for easy reading. We started with the menus. The student had to tell me what they wanted to have for dinner. I had one student "call" and place the order. This led to conversations about their favorite foods and where they used to go with their families. They then picked from the TV guide. I gave them each a time slot and they had to pick what show they wanted to watch. Again, this had a great "reminiscent" function, leading to conversation of favorite TV shows. The best was part was when they picked their favorite music to play. The students began to sing Frank Sinatra songs! What really made this activity successful was the student's ability to prompt each other with questions and encouragement. My part was to monitor the language and prompt or cue when needed. The nature of this activity allowed for a "functional" language activity, promoting spontaneous language and increased vocabulary. During the activity, I would ask each student what they ordered for dinner or what restaurant we were ordering from, to monitor memory. The activity itself promoted long-term memory skills, allowing the student to rehash positive memories and share them with others. This activity lead to similar language activity's such as, "planning a party" and "planning a vacation". These activities promote vocabulary, language form, language use & memory skills. Students that are less able can participate in modified versions of these activities such as "Let's cook breakfast" or "Let's go grocery shopping". These themes can be modified for teenagers & young adults.

22. I work in a public-school setting with limited resources. To increase writing skills, each desk has a group of ten words taped to it. At each session, students are asked to read the words on their desk at least twice per session. These words (same set on each desk) are used in a variety of activities. By the end of the 6-week period, we chart their percentages, and rewards are given. As the year progresses, the word list is changed, and more freedom in word list selection is

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allowed. Students who do not learn the complete list on a specific desk are not penalized but rewarded to a lesser degree. At the end each therapy year, I have found that my students' reading vocabulary skills have improved significantly. Penalties are given to students who remove the word list. Lists are taken from all academic areas. Thank you for trying this activity on language/Inclusive/special/gifted students.

To teach categories. Make a magnetic grid from a picture frame as big as you want. Get a picture frame and some steel (magnetic thin backing) backing sold at a hardware store... take the glass off the frame, cut the steel to fit the back, put the frame back together but use the back which has a grid in place of the glass (usually 4). Buy refrigerator magnets. Label each section with PECS and velcro so they can be changed. Students love the magnets and enjoy placing them on the magnetic board. The best one is the radio that plays music and the toilet that flushes!! The categories are endless. You can even make your own magnets with strong glue and magnet strips sold in the craft store!!! The board can be used on the table or hung on the wall!

I work in a high school and have language disordered students on my caseload. Finding motivating materials to address IEP goals and objectives can be challenging at times. One of the things I do is present frame games like the ones that are found in the USA Weekend section of the Sunday newspaper by Terry Stickels. The students are encouraged to look at the frame and tell me what they see. I am able to elicit synonyms and other desired language concepts in a fun, competitive format. The object ultimately is to elicit the well-known idiomatic expression, person, place, or thing. We then discuss the meaning of the idioms, whether or not they have heard/used the expression before, and situations in which it would be appropriate/inappropriate to use the idiom. At times they are encouraged to illustrate an idiom that they are familiar with to see if other group members can guess what it is. This activity is a break from the monotony of worksheets that our students have been forced to complete during their years in therapy. I would also suggest doing a Google or other type of engine search when you run out of ideas for these frame games. When I did this, I was able to get into the archives where I found tons of ideas. I would be very surprised if your students did not enjoy this activity. My students never seem to tire of this and want to do it over and over.