



Descriptive Talking

Skill Being Taught: Descriptive Talking—Using simple language to explain concepts and actions that are happening to your child.

Facts

1. In order to use a word meaningfully, a child must first hear the word spoken a number of times, in a number of situations, by a number of people.
2. A child learns the meaning of spoken words when they are used in situations that are important to her.
3. The meaning of words is also learned during day-to-day interactions with parents and other caregivers who talk to the child about the people and things that are important in her life.
4. A child learns how to listen by hearing parents and others name and describe things they do together.

What outcomes do we want?

Increase how often parents and other adults who are important to a child talk about what is happening as they interact with the child.

What outcomes do we NOT want?

Parents interacting with their child but not talking to her about what is happening.



What do we need to do?

As you engage in any daily routine with your child, use spoken words to help her understand the experience. If she is just beginning to understand single words, you might use only simple phrases. As her understanding of words improves, you can begin to use longer sentences.

Step #1: Describe what you are going to do with your child.

Examples:

- Just before picking her up, say "Up. Daddy's going to pick you up."
- Before wiping food from her face, say "Let's wipe your chin."
- As you get ready to push her wheelchair, say "Ready to go? Daddy's going to push you!"

Step #2: Describe what your child is doing and the movements and sounds she is making as the two of you interact.

Examples:

- When she finds the switch to activate a toy that makes sounds, say, "You turned on the bumpy ball!" "You made the fire truck go!"
- As you push your child in a swing, say "You are swinging. You're going fast!" or "Ooooo—can you feel the wind?"
- While giving your child a bath, say "Feel the bubbles?" "You're kicking the water." "Feel the water on your arms" (or face, etc.).

Step #3: Comment on events, especially if they are unexpected.

Examples:

- If your child stumbles or falls down (and is not hurt), say "Uh-oh! You fell down! Let me help you stand up."
- When the family cat jumps up on a table while you and your child are having a snack, say "Look at that cat! She jumped up on the table. She wants to eat your cookie!"
- If an older sibling walks in the door from college, say "Listen! Who is that talking? Your brother is home! Come say 'Hi'."

Step #4: Describe what you are doing.

Examples:

- "I am closing the door."
- "Mommy spilled her coffee."