

Helping Kids Discover and Develop Language

4 years

1. The child speaks in complete, complex sentences. (i.e. 4 or more words long and using adult-type grammar)

For example, the child may say, “The cat is hiding under the couch.”

SUGGESTIONS:

- Expand or rephrase your child’s sentences to make a more complex utterance
- Read stories to your child which involve sentences of 4 or more words

2. The child asks “wh-“questions to learn about the world and can answer them.

For example, the child will ask “what”, “Where”, “When”, “Why”, “Who”, “How” questions.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Avoid ignoring your child when he/she asks a question. Always provide your child with some type of answer.
- Occasionally, when you are asking your child to do something, fail to provide enough information. This creates the need for the child to ask you questions to fill in the missing details.

3. The child uses the past-tense ending “ed” correctly.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Talk about events and objects that interest your child
- Talk about things that happened in the near past with your child (eg. things that happened earlier in the morning)
- Model the correct form for your child (eg. If your child says: “I jump off box.” you could say: “You **jumped** off the box.”)
- Emphasize the “ed” when you use past tense verbs (eg. “Look, the dog **wagged** his tail.”)
- Have your child draw pictures to show things that happened in the past that he/she enjoyed

4. The child uses such contractions as “can’t”, “don’t” and “won’t”.

For example, the child may say “I can’t” or “I don’t want it.”

SUGGESTIONS:

- Model the correct form for your child following his/her incorrect production
- Emphasize the contractions during conversation
- Read stories that have a lot of contractions such as “Murmel, Murmel, Murmel” by R. Munsch

5. The child uses “is + verb-ing” consistently.

For example, the child may say, “He is going to store.”

SUGGESTIONS:

- Model and stress the correct form in your speech (eg. “She’s **jumping** in the water.”)
- Emphasize the “ing” ending while reading story books
- Use a variety of verbs with “ing” endings while playing with your child.

6. The child is understood by strangers almost all of the time, though errors may still be evident.

7. The child can listen to stories for extended periods of time (>15 minutes) and remember details.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Use a lot of expression in your voice while reading to your child
- Use different voices for the lines of the various characters
- Buy books that your child is interested in – this will help to increase his/her motivation to look at and talk about stories
- Have a number of books available around your home
- Set aside a “special reading time” for you and your child
- Have your child make up his/her own story using picture books without words

8. The child can tell stories with a clear beginning, middle and end.

9. The child can follow directions involving 3 or more steps (eg. “First get some paper, get the glue, and put them on the table.”)