

# Helping Children Communicate

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# My Background

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- Bilingual Speech-Language Pathologist
- 6 years working in the public schools (pre-k to high school)
- 2 years working in private practice
- Currently working with K-5 at Sandown North and Sandown Central



# WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

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# WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

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- Words
- Sounds (articulation)
- Signs
- Behaviors
- Reading
- Writing
- Sharing meaning
- Speaking
- Listening
- Exchanging information
- Interactions between two people
- Facial expressions
- Body language
- Voice
- Cognition (problem solving, executive function)
- Social skills
- Play skills

# TALK, READ, SING!

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- Children who are exposed to more words are more likely to do well in school
- Language is innate, but the quantity and quality of language exposure matters



# Communication Development 0-6 Months

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- 0-3 months:
  - Expression/Talking:
    - Laughing and cooing (comfort)
    - Vowel sounds (ooo, eee, ahhh)
    - Different cries to communicate needs (hungry, dirty diaper, tired)
    - Social smile
  - Comprehension/Listening:
    - Able to discriminate different sounds
    - Turns head to sound
    - Can differentiate speech sounds and non-speech sounds
    - Recognizes familiar voices

# Communication Development 0-6 Months

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- 4-6 months:
  - Expression/Talking:
    - Babbling (mamama, dadada)
    - Laughing
    - Squealing/vocal play
    - Cries when you stop playing
    - Imitates facial expressions, enjoys looking in the mirror
  - Comprehension/Listening:
    - Moves eyes towards sound
    - Attends to music and toys that make noise/light up
    - Reacts to tone of voice and can respond to your emotions by crying or laughing/smiling



# Encouraging Communication 0-6 Months

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## Motherese

The innate way that adults talk to babies.

### Example

Speak in a higher pitch, exaggerate consonants & stretch vowels, and vary your volume.

## Self-Talk

Describe everything you're doing as you're doing it.

### Example

"Mommy's making lunch. I'm pouring it in the bowl. The bowl is blue and shiny."

## Parallel Talk

Describe everything your baby is doing as they do it.

### Example

As baby plays with a ball, you say, "you're rolling the ball. You like that ball".

## Turn Taking

Respond to baby's utterances and pause when you talk to give baby a turn.

### Example

If baby coos, then you coo in response. Ask baby a question, then pause and wait for a response.



# Encouraging Communication 0-6 Months

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- Let baby see your face while you talk (changing table, meal times)
- Baby is listening to your inflection and intonation, exaggerate your expressions
- Imitation helps develop turn-taking skills

# Encouraging Communication 0-6 Months

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- Read books with bright colors & patterns, soft books, board books
- Sing (Comforting, soothing, familiar songs help baby relax)
- Encourage mirror play (watch themselves move feet, hands)
- Cause/Effect toys:
  - Touch it and it makes noise/lights up
  - Accidental discovery that touching can cause things to happen
- Explore different environments
  - New settings create new experiences and new opportunities for exposure to vocabulary



# Communication Development 6-12 Months

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Pairing gestures and vocalizations to communicate (reaching out, waving)
  - Varies sounds within babbling and vocal play (m, b, p, n, d)
  - Begins to use intonation, voice sounds like exclamation or question (10 months+)
  - First words appear around first birthday
  - Tries to gain attention by making noises

# Communication Development 6-12 Months

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Turns head to sound
  - Recognizes name when called to
  - Respond to common words/phrases (e.g., bye-bye, eat)
  - Responds to simple directions (e.g., stop)
  - Will search for common objects or people when named
  - Enjoys playing interactive games



# Encouraging Communication 6-12 Months

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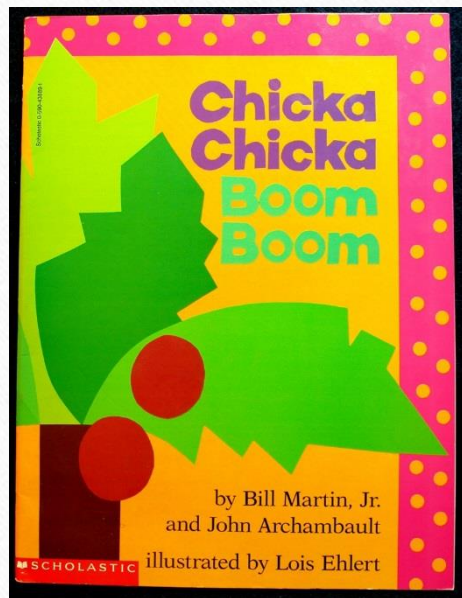
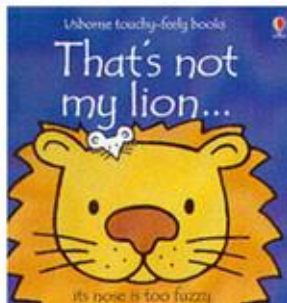
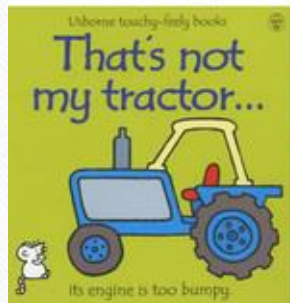
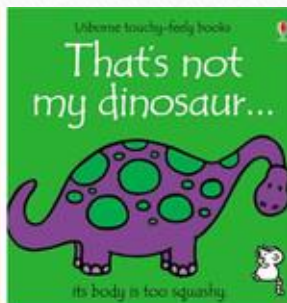
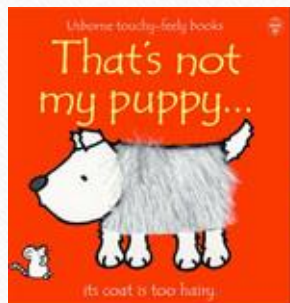
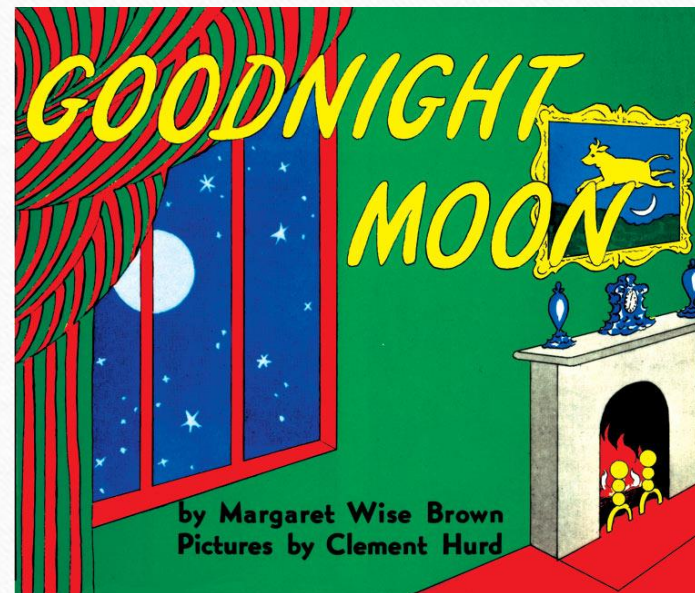
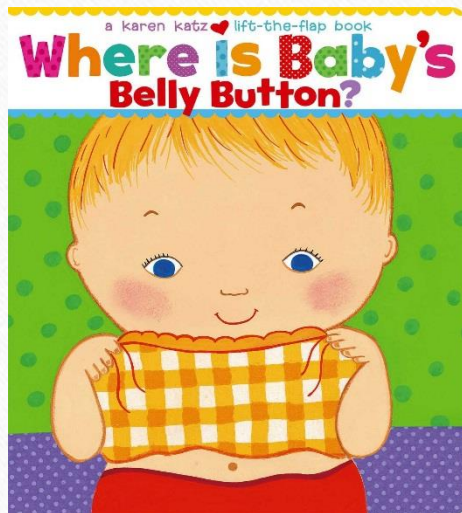
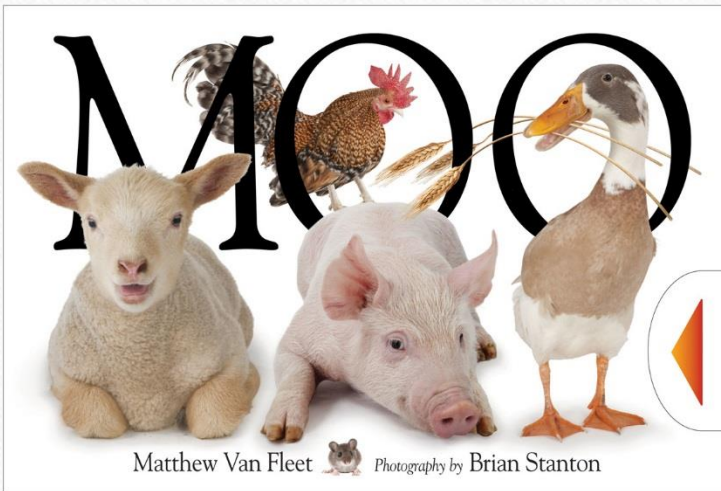
- Teach the structure of conversation through turn-taking, imitation, and pausing (actions, words, sounds, facial expressions)
- Play social games that encourage interaction and play (Patty Cake, Peek-a-Boo)
- Baby sensory play (edible finger paint, baby-friendly sensory bins, colored ice, snow)
- Songs/Nursery Rhymes
- Book reading activities- lift the flap books, texture books; incorporate physical interactions, noises, vary intonation
- Story Telling Baskets (with teacher supervision)- exploration of items, more interactive helps sustain attention

# A Note on Reading to Babies

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- Don't make them sit
- You may not get through the book (skip pages)
- Make it interactive and fun- don't be afraid to modify the book to include familiar words, sounds, add noises
- Give them access to books







# A Note on Joint Attention

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- Joint attention is critical to social, cognitive, and language development
- Frequency is related to later language development (Morales et al., 2000)
- Associated with differences in IQ, self-regulation, social skills (Mundy et al., 2007)
- Without it, they may have difficulty with developing language, play/social skills, learning by watching others
- Emerges at 9 months, well established by 18 months







# Encouraging Joint Attention

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- **MODEL**- point + label (point to objects around the room)
- Playing pointing “games” (point to body parts)
- Play with bubbles- point to bubbles, pop bubbles, use language!
- Positive reinforcement of pointing by getting excited when baby points
- Acknowledge that you know what they are pointing at by labeling; then, continue the conversation by describing what they are pointing



# Communication Development 12-18 Months

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Uses common words to label/request (mama, up, more, uh-oh)
  - Tries to imitate simple words
  - Begin simple pretend play
- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Responds to name
  - Understands basic words and phrases
  - Follows some simple directions paired with gestures (Give me the..)
  - Understands some basic questions (Where's daddy? Where are your shoes?)

# Communication Development 18 Months-2 Years

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- Expression/Talking:
  - More language + independence=temper tantrums 😊
  - Consistently using 10-20 words
  - Asks for common foods by name (banana, cracker)
  - Makes animal/car sounds (moo, vroom)
  - Starts to combine two words together (50+ words)
  - Starts to use some pronouns (“mine”)
  - Sings/hums



# Communication Development 18 Months-2 Years

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Understands basic verbs (eat, drink, sleep)
  - Follows simple directions without gestures
  - Identifies basic body parts
  - Mostly parallel play, imitates play of adults or other children





# Communication Development 2-3 Years

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Uses about 200-300 words
  - Uses the following sounds [m, n, b, p, t, w, h] (strangers still may not be able to understand)
  - Two to three word phrases
  - Asks “what” and “where” questions
  - Uses the negatives “no” and “not”
  - Uses intonation to make statements into questions (“shoes” versus “shoes?”)
  - Begins to use plurals and regular past tense
  - Refers to self by name

# Communication Development 2-3 Years

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Understands the basic spatial concepts “in” and “on”
  - Understands some basic pronouns “my, “your,” “his”
  - Answers simple questions
  - Identifies body parts
  - Sustains attention to one activity for ~5 minutes



# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- “Say what you see”/Sports Announcer
- Think comments, not questions! (4:1 Ratio)
- Instead of...
  - Where’s the bear?
  - What is it?
  - Who’s here?
  - Where are your shoes?

# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Always respond to ANY type of communication- gestures, words, grunts
  - “Just a minute!” + make eye contact
- Acknowledge that you understand them by repeating them and expanding the child’s word/phrase by 2-3 words (e.g., “Ball!” “Yeah, throw ball!”)
- Always model the next stage of development (plurals, longer sentences, pronouns)
- Make eye contact and get down to the child’s level so that they can see your mouth
- Simplify your language (repetition, simple sentences, be aware of your vocabulary)



# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Try it:
  - “Doggie!”
  - “Open”
  - “Me want open”
  - “I see giraffe”
  - “Him scary”

# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Music:
  - Give them song choices (objects, laminated pictures)
  - Encourage them to listen and react to songs (hum, sing along, following directions with movement)
  - Give choices about singing songs in different ways (fast, slow, loud, quiet)
  - Pause to allow them to fill in words of a familiar song (Row, row, row your \_\_\_\_)
- Books:
  - Looking for/pointing to specific pictures
  - Filling in words for books with repetitive phrases
  - Story telling baskets (make story telling activities interactive to sustain attention)
  - Touch/feel books, interactive buttons, animal/object noises, 101 First vocabulary books



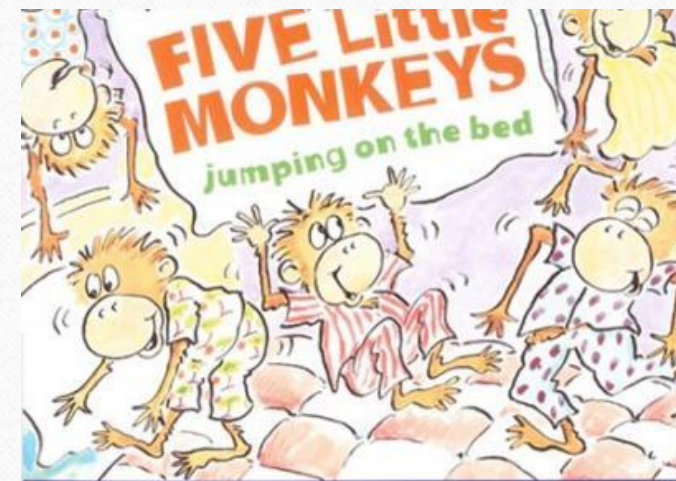
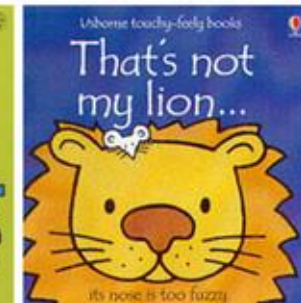
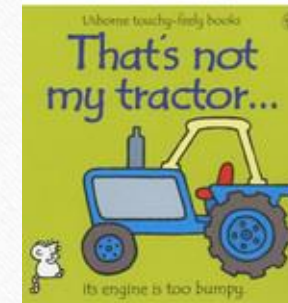
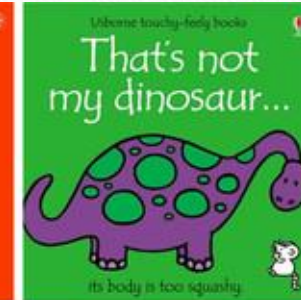
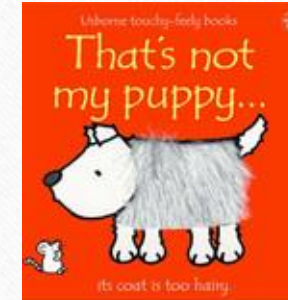
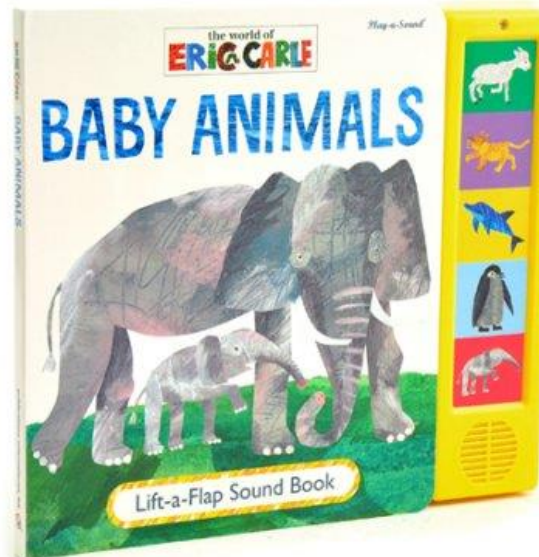
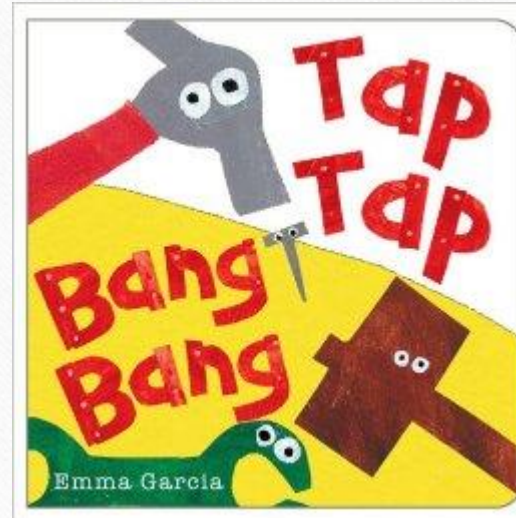
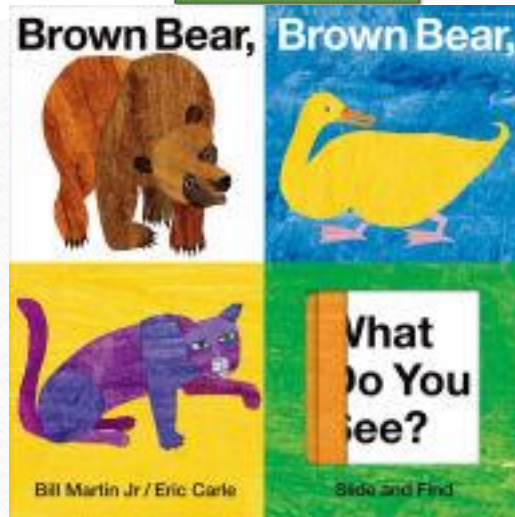
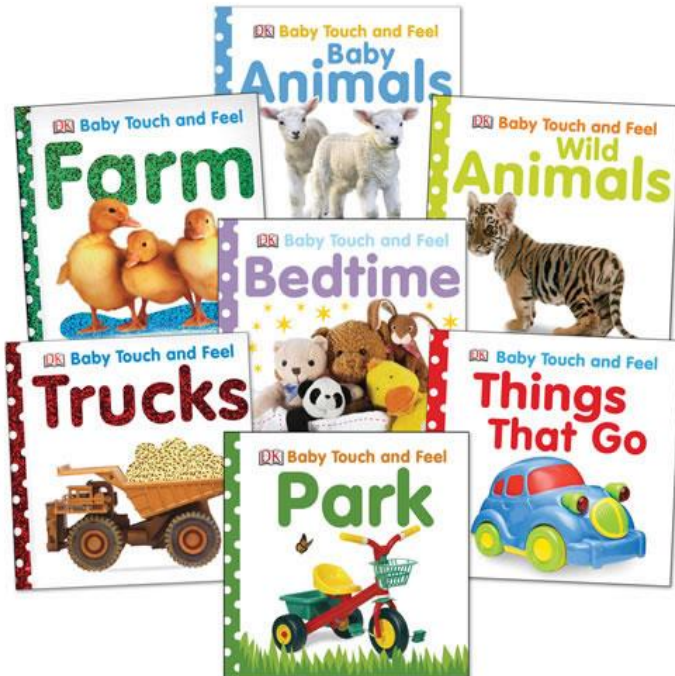


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# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Play:
  - Repeat common phrases over and over while playing with different toys (Ready, set, go!)
  - Model how to play with different toys (Car/truck noises)
  - Model simple language for pretend play (telephone: hello/goodbye)
  - Provide toys that work on positional concepts (in/on/under), encourage animal noises
  - Encourage turn-taking games (rolling a ball)
  - Set up the environment for onlooker (watching others play) and parallel play (side by side play)
  - Provide enough toys for sharing and turn-taking
  - Toys that encourage open-ended play (blocks, farm, babies, house, trains, food)
  - Sit and play with them at first, then step back



# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Meal Times
  - Food can be very motivating!
  - Give choices whenever possible- can use packages, pictures, or actual food
  - Prompt child to make requests (provide the first sound “mmm” for milk)
  - Waiting/withholding
  - Intentionally place things out of reach to encourage communication
  - What vocabulary would you target?

# Encouraging Communication 1-3 Years

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- Nature Walks
  - Talk about what you see, feel, hear, smell
  - Use different action words to describe what you are doing/seeing and positional words (in, on, step over, go under)
  - Compare/contrast the things that you see and find (leaves, birds, bugs)
- Sensory Tables
  - See, smell, touch, hear
  - Think about the words/phrases that should be targeted and encouraged
  - Make it a language learning experience
  - Play with the materials yourself and over exaggerate to get them interested in play
  - What words/phrases would you target for a sand sensory table?



# Communication Development 3-4 Years

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Begin producing [k, g, d, ng] in addition to previous sounds
  - Says about 1,000 different words
  - Strangers understand most of what they say
  - Can describe what different objects are used for (spoon, shoes)
  - Expresses feelings
  - Uses verbs ending in “ing”
  - Names at least a few colors
  - Answers basic personal questions: first name, last name, age, gender
  - Uses 3-4 words in a sentence
  - Sings songs
  - Asks “what” questions

# Communication Development 3-4 Years

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Groups objects into basic categories (food, clothes, animals)
  - Understands prepositional phrases (put it *in the box*, it is *under the table*)
  - Sustains attention to an activity for 8-9 minutes
  - Understands the concepts of day/night
  - Understands basic time concepts: morning/today/tomorrow



# Communication Development 4-5 Years

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Now correctly producing [f, s, y]
  - Has trouble saying long, complex words (spaghetti)
  - Uses some irregular past tense (fell, ran)
  - Names items in a basic category (food, clothing, animals)
  - Answers basic “why” questions
  - Uses 4-5 words in a sentence
  - Asks “who” and “why” questions
  - Uses qualitative concepts, like big/small, long/short

# Communication Development 4-5 Years

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Understands spatial concepts “behind” and “under”
  - Understands complex questions
  - Sustains attention to activity for 11-12 minutes
  - Understands same/different



# Communication Development 5-6 Years

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- Expression/Talking:
  - Now correctly producing [v, z, sh, ch, j, l]
  - Uses 2,000+ words
  - Engages in conversation
  - Uses sentences that are 5-6 words in length
  - Beginning to use compound and complex sentences
  - Describes objects
  - Uses imagination to create stories
  - Uses future, present, and past tense verbs

# Communication Development 5-6 Years

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- Comprehension/Understanding:
  - Understands time sequences (what happened first, second)
  - Carries out basic three-step directions
  - Understands rhyming
  - Knows common opposites
  - Shows interest in print
  - Sustains attention to activity for 12-13 minutes



# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Acknowledge that you understand what they are saying by repeating what they say
- Continue to build and expand on what they've said (add descriptors, prepositional phrases)
- Continue to model the next stage of development (plurals, past tense, compound/complex sentences)
- Repeat sentences containing errors and emphasize the correct form (Me want/*I* want)

# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Use open-ended questions
- Incorporate a variety of spatial (in, on, under, behind, next to), sequence (first, second, third, last, next), and quantity (all, many, some, few) concepts into following directions activities



# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Practice with a partner:
  - “I put it in”
  - “Yesterday mommy taked me to the store”
  - “My mommy made this. I don’t like it”
  - “Me want to go play with the blocks”
  - “Look, I found a leaf!”

# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Simple crafts to encourage following directions
- Categorization
  - Sort objects by size (rocks, shells), color (leaves), shape, weight
  - Identify objects that do not belong with a group
- Music:
  - Pair songs with actions to practice listening skills
  - Exposure to new vocabulary and new sentence structures
  - Turn-taking



# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Play:
  - Important for acquiring new language structures and vocabulary
  - A safe place for learning to create, problem solve, and discover new things
  - Let the child take the lead (greater investment)
  - Encourage turn-taking: blocks, organized sports, board games
  - Model phrases, key words, vocabulary, sentence structures, ideas for using tools
  - Model positive social behaviors
  - Encourage reading and writing in the dramatic play area





# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Literacy:
  - Repeated book reading helps master new vocabulary and phrases, develop a sense of sequencing, and make predictions
  - Reading books with repetition helps them to “read” along
  - Begin asking prediction questions “What do you think...?” to encourage problem solving
  - Ask open-ended questions and use a variety of question words (who, what, when, where, how)
  - Teach beginning sequencing and social interactions depicted in books by acting out stories with puppets, costumes, or props (helps experience and internalize the story line)
  - Use a basket full of objects to create your own story
  - Make your own books!







# Encouraging Communication 3-6 Years

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- Vocabulary:
  - Explicit, systematic instruction
  - Teach a variety of words, including nouns, verbs, adjectives
  - Book reading, dramatic play, sensory tables
  - Use simple words to define new vocabulary, Children's Dictionary
  - Make vocabulary learning interactive whenever possible
  - Experience new words through play
  - Include category names in your definitions when appropriate
  - Incorporate categorization activities into your vocabulary teaching
  - Use "riddles" to help children to start thinking about what objects are used for, describing

# Feeding/Swallowing

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- 20-25% of “typical” children have feeding issues
- Feeding “Red Flags”:
  - Difficulty breathing during meals/snack
  - Choking, vomiting, gagging, excessive crying on a daily basis
  - Tantrums/stress around eating, throwing plates/utensils
  - Difficulty chewing food
  - Refusal of food based on texture or food group
  - Difficulty transitioning from puree to solids
  - Cannot drink from a straw at one year
  - Failure to thrive
  - Unable to eat in a stimulating environment



# Feeding/Swallowing

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- When it's just a “picky eater”:
  - 30+ foods in food repertoire
  - Enough food for appropriate weight gain
  - Lose interest in a food, then gain interest again every few weeks
  - Tolerate having food on plate
  - At least one food from each food group

# Feeding/Swallowing

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- Encouraging the typical “picky eater”:
  - Prepare food together, use fun tools
  - Build a relationship with food through gardening and food experiments
  - Play with your food!
    - Experience foods to help adjust to texture and temperature
    - Start with smooth puree (pudding) to thicker purees (mashed potato)
    - May start with water play if they are extremely adverse to textures
    - Cars/mud, animals/snow
    - Painting with spices and water
  - Offer small portions of new foods



# Feeding/Swallowing

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- Encouraging the typical “picky eater” (continued):
  - Serve food after it has cooled to alleviate smell
  - Encourage some type of interaction with new foods- put it on plate, lick it, tip of finger/side of thumb, hear it crunch, smell it
  - Use songs/chimes/rituals at meal/snack times to encourage consistency
  - Encourage stability- don't let feet dangle
  - Don't let meal/snack times last for more than 20-30 minutes
  - Expose children to a variety of foods/flavors early
  - Keep rotating through the same foods to build familiarity