

Encouraging Children to Talk During Play

Introduction:

Our children with social language delays may not be sure how to talk with their friends during play. That may sit and quietly play by themselves or they may say something that doesn't make any sense to their peer. Use the visual aid on the next page to help the child know what to say during play to continue or start a conversation with peers.

Instructions:

Pick one of the options on the next page to teach at a time. Explain to the child what the skill is and how it can be used to hold conversations with his peers. Practice that skill during structured play situations with you. For example, if the skill is "make a comment", set up a play situation and help the child come up with ways that he can comment on your play. Comment on his play as well so he sees how you do the skill. Keep practicing the skill until he can do it on command (example: if you say "make a comment", he can do so appropriately). Then, teach him the same way on the other skills.

Once the child knows how to do all of the things on the next page, show him the page and explain that when he is playing with other kids, he can choose any of those four skills to start or maintain a conversation. Set up some play situations with the child and a peer so you can help him practice using those strategies. You may need to prompt him at first until he gets better at doing this on his own.

Later, you can hang this poster in the child's play area as a reminder for him.

Talk to Me!

Help your child practice conversational skills using these prompts. When you are playing with your child, or your child is playing with someone else, look for the times when it would be appropriate for your child to say something. Prompt your child to choose one of these strategies at that time. Help your child practice the strategies until he starts to use them on his own. You may want to focus on one at a time.



Make a Comment

Have your child tell something she sees or something that's happening. Or, he can comment on someone else's play or possessions.



Ask a Question

Have your child ask someone else a question about what they're doing, what they like to do, or anything else they can think of.



Respond

Help your child respond to something that someone else said. That can be answering a question or making a follow-up comment about something they said.



Suggest a Play Idea

Help your child add something new by suggesting a new play idea. Your child can say "Let's..." and then follow up with something he would like to do with the toys.

Extra Practice: When you are playing or conversing with your child, demonstrate these strategies so your child hears many models of how to communicate with other people.