

Dos and Don'ts to Help Stimulate Oral Language in Young Children

Do	Don't
✓ Place yourself at the child's height, face to face	✗ Speak to a child from across the room
✓ Pause often and wait during language activities for the child to comment or ask a question	✗ Speak continuously ✗ Pause speaking but shift your focus
✓ Follow the child's lead and respond to their communication attempts by commenting	✗ Redirect the conversation away from the child's interests
✓ Allow the child time to formulate their requests	✗ Anticipate a child's request or finish their statement
✓ Maintain the conversation for at least four turns (<i>two per person</i>)	✗ Move on to another child after one conversational exchange
✓ Encourage children to communicate with one another	✗ Discourage children from communicating with one another
✓ Use more open-ended questions	✗ Ask a lot of yes/no and test-like questions
✓ Speak more slowly but naturally	✗ Speak quickly without pausing or over articulate
✓ Model then pause and freeze to allow the child to spontaneously repeat what you said	✗ Ask the child to repeat your model
✓ Offer a choice or request clarification when you do not understand	✗ Pretend to have understood
✓ Use language at a level close to the child's level	✗ Use ungrammatical or " <i>telegraphic</i> " language, i.e., language that omits small words like <i>is</i> , <i>and</i> , or tenses
✓ Repair and repeat the child's utterance, emphasizing the correction with your intonation	✗ Provide negative feedback when the child makes an error
✓ Evaluate a child's response and expand it by adding one or two words to what they said	✗ Simply evaluate a child's response, e.g., " <i>Yes</i> " or " <i>That's right</i> "
✓ Create opportunities for children to hear new vocabulary words many times in varied contexts	✗ Move on too quickly to new themes and new words
✓ Engage in interactive or dialogic book reading	✗ Read through the book while the children listen quietly throughout
✓ Compare and contrast words and expressions from different languages – celebrate languages and cultures	✗ Prevent students from speaking another language