

learning links



Helping Kids Learn

www.learninglinks.org.au

Information Sheet 34

Enhancing your child's language

By Belinda Fisher, Speech Pathologist

Parents often ask what they can do to enhance their school age child's language. Here are a few ideas if your child needs help in this area.

Descriptive language

Difficulties with descriptions can limit your child's language to labelling and commenting.

Descriptions provide additional information and allow your child to express him or herself using more complex sentences. They also provide children with the opportunity to learn and use new words that describe such things as size, colour, shape, texture and feelings.

Activities at home that you can do to help your child's descriptive language include the following.

- Look at the colour, size and shape of things when you look at pictures together or are driving or playing with toys. Say things like 'find me a green toy' or 'look at the cow, it's a big cow'.
- Expose your child to various describing words as much as possible, talking about the size of things, their smell, shape, taste, colour and texture.

- Make a 'feelie bag' where you put different textured objects into a pillowcase and ask your child to put their hand in the bag. Then ask your child to describe what the object they are holding feels like. Make a list of different words they can use such as slimy, cold, smooth and rough.
- Describe objects to your child that they can see or touch. Then ask your child to describe things that cannot be seen or touched, such as feelings or things in a different room.
- Play guessing games and ask your child to describe an object or a person so you can guess what or who it is. This can be a family game where everyone has a turn.
- Play I spy where you use the first sound and descriptive language to guess items.
- Provide a model of concepts in conversation. For example, you can emphasise words that illustrate time in sentences such as, 'We are going to Grandma's house next week'.
- Ask your child to act out concepts during games or playtime. Things such as 'touch your nose after you stamp your feet' (time), 'put the block beside the teddy' (place), and 'put some of the pencils in the pencil case' (quantity).

Sentence Structure

Children who are developing language use sentences that are simple and generally contain one idea such as, 'I like ice cream'.

Children then make their sentences more complex by joining ideas and sentences. These more complex sentences allow them to further describe ideas, make comparisons and provide reasons.

Difficulties in this area may lead to children sounding immature or having difficulties explaining their reasons.

Concepts

It is also important to develop your child's understanding of concepts – things like beside, after, many, next week, next Monday and before.

Some activities that you can do to help your child's understanding of concepts include the following:

Learning Links is a non-profit charity assisting children who have difficulty learning and their families.

We raise funds to help children from birth to 18 years by offering a range of services including the following.

Early Childhood Services for children from birth to six years.

- Early childhood intervention and support for very young children.
- An inclusive preschool for children with and without special needs.
- An assessment and consultancy service for families who are concerned about their young child's development.
- Specialist early childhood teaching and therapy.

School Age Services for children from Kindergarten to Year 12 who have low support needs.

- Comprehensive assessments.
- Small group tuition and therapy.
- Occupational and speech therapy programs combining specialist education services and therapy.
- Outreach programs.
- The Ronald McDonald Learning Program for seriously ill children and the Reading for Life Program for children falling behind in their reading.

Family Services helping and supporting families and health professionals.

- Centre and home-based family counselling.
- Parenting Programs and groups for families.
- Case Management Services.

Professional Development for teachers and health professionals.

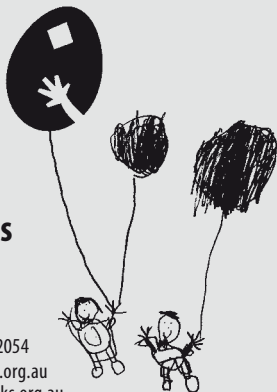
Presentations, workshops and advice on identifying and helping children with learning difficulties, learning disabilities and developmental delays.

Learning Links has branches in six Sydney locations at Peakhurst, Penshurst, Fairfield, Miller, Dee Why and Randwick. We also offer some services to children in country NSW, the ACT, Victoria and New Zealand. A complete list of branch locations and contact numbers is on the back cover.

Learning Links

Head Office

12-14 Pindari Road
Peakhurst NSW 2210
Tel: 9534 1710 Fax: 9584 2054
Email: mail@learninglinks.org.au
Website: www.learninglinks.org.au



Enquiries regarding this Information Sheet should be directed to Robyn Collins
Tel: (02) 9534 1710 Fax: (02) 9584 2054 Email: rcollins@learninglinks.org.au

© Learning Links 2006. The material in this publication cannot be reproduced without the written permission of Learning Links.

Some activities that you can do to help your child's sentence structure include the following.

- Listen to your child talking and then model more complex sentences using what they have said. For example, your child might say, 'I like soccer. Soccer is fun.' You can say, 'You like soccer because it is fun.'
- Ask your child to complete sentences such as:–
'My favourite food is _____ because _____.'
- Give your child examples of complex sentences when talking and emphasise the joining words. For example, 'We are going to the park today because we want to have fun playing on the swings.'
- If your child uses incorrect grammar, repeat the sentence using the correct grammar. Occasionally have the child repeat the sentence with the correct grammar. It is important not to do this all the time or your child may resist talking.
- Expand what your child says to you. For example, if your child says, 'He was eating'; say 'Yes, he was eating a vegemite sandwich.'
- Make deliberate mistakes and have your child fix them.
- Point out joining words and correct grammar in stories you are reading.
- Make up two sentences and have your child join them with a joining word. For example, you say, 'It was dark. I turned on the light'. Your child will (hopefully) say, 'It was dark so I turned on the light'.
- Think about making your questions more creative. Instead of asking 'How was your day?' and getting a one-word response, try asking more specific questions like, 'What was the most boring thing about today?'
- Start a scrapbook to document events that happen to your child. You may include a drawing or a picture to remind the child what happened or write a story about an event. You and your child can regularly look through the book and talk about what happened.

Procedures

It is important for children to understand the concept of a procedure – that there are steps involved in doing many things, especially day-to-day activities such as washing the dishes in the sink – putting water in the sink, putting in detergent, putting gloves on, etc.

Some activities that you can do to help your child's understand the concept of procedures include the following.

- Talk about activities with steps in them as you are doing them, for example, making dinner and getting dressed. Talk to your child as you do each particular step.
- Use language such as first, second, next and last whenever possible.
- Encourage your child to make a list to show the steps required to do something at home. You can also draw pictures to show each step of the instruction.

General Conversation

Conversation involves a combination of different communication skills. To encourage general conversation skills, there are a number of things you can do at home. These include the following.

- Promote conversation around home routines such as cooking, shopping and getting dressed.
- Challenge your child's thinking and encourage them to consider other points of view.
- Discuss different solutions to problems and then reason to find a conclusion.
- Encourage your child to justify and provide reasons for their ideas.
- Encourage your child to participate in various social situations such as talking on the phone, playing with friends and family, joining community and sporting groups.
- Turn off the TV at dinnertime and talk as a family.



www.learninglinks.org.au

Early Childhood Services
– all enquiries to Head Office

School Age Services
– contact your local branch

Family Services
– contact your local branch

All other enquiries
– Head Office

Head Office
12-14 Pindari Road
Peakhurst NSW 2210
Telephone: (02) 9534 1710
Preschool: (02) 9533 3283
Facsimile: (02) 9584 2054
Email: mail@learninglinks.org.au

Northern Suburbs Branch
2 Alfred Road
PO Box 634
Brookvale NSW 2100
Telephone: (02) 9907 4222
Facsimile: (02) 9907 4244
Email: nsb@learninglinks.org.au

Western Suburbs Branch
Unit 7/9 William Street
PO Box 1026
Fairfield NSW 1860 (2165)
Telephone: (02) 9754 2377
Facsimile: (02) 9755 9422
Email: wsb@learninglinks.org.au

Southern Suburbs Branch
10 Railway Parade
Penshurst NSW 2222
Telephone: (02) 9580 4888
Facsimile: (02) 9580 4788
Email: ssb@learninglinks.org.au

South West Sydney Branch
88 Shropshire Street
PO Box 42
Miller NSW 2168
Telephone: (02) 8783 7111
Facsimile: (02) 8783 7222
Email: sws@learninglinks.org.au

Eastern Suburbs Branch
1/20 Silver Street
Randwick NSW 2032
Telephone: (02) 9398 5188
Facsimile: (02) 9326 5364
Email: esb@learninglinks.org.au

Please help us help children

Please PRINT

- I would like to donate \$_____ to help kids who have difficulty learning.
- I would like to be a member of Learning Links. *Please tick appropriate box below.*
 - Individual or Family \$45 (including GST)
 - Professional \$45 (including GST)
 - Not for profit Organisation \$55 (including GST)
 - Corporate \$70 (including GST)

Individual, Family and professional membership includes one copy of *Learning Links News*

I enclose my: Cheque Money Order **or**

Charge my: BANKCARD VISA MASTERCARD AMEX

Account No: _____ CCV*: _____

Visa and Mastercard last 3 digits on back of card.

Account Name: _____ Expiry Date: ____ / ____

Signature: _____

Name (Dr, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms): _____

Organisation/Business: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel: (Home): _____ (Business): _____

Please post to Learning Links: 12-14 Pindari Road, Peakhurst NSW 2210. *Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and will be receipted.*

