

Ask a Speech-Language Pathologist

PARENT:

My 2 year old is beginning to talk, but is not yet combining words. What can I do?

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST:

Try these ideas for expanding expressive language!

Anticipatory Play

- Engage in turn taking play to help your child learn to anticipate what word comes next. As you play, begin to pause and wait for the last word and encourage them to say the word in order to get a turn or toy. (ex. Ready, Set...GO!)
- Gradually work towards having the child say more and more of the phrase in order to get the desired toy or turn.
- Here are some more ideas for how to use anticipatory play to elicit and expand expressive language: Blowing bubbles, playing catch with a ball, playing hide-n-seek (saying, "I see you!", etc.), swinging on a swing, spinning in a chair that can spin, building and knocking down block towers.

Engineer the Environment

- Place toys or desired objects just out of reach so your child has to ask for help or use language to get your attention.
- Place toys in a container that they are unable to open on their own, prompting them to ask for help. (ex. Put toys in a jar with a lid or Tupperware container).
- Keep toys in the container, only taking out one or a few at items at a time, providing more opportunities for language.
- Involve them in the clean-up and encourage them to request a new toy once done cleaning up as needed from a choice of two.
- Hold out 2 choices and prompt your child to use words in order to get the toy. (ex. Require to say "ball" in order to get the ball).



Expansion

- Expand what they say to include 1-2 more words, prompting them to use in order to get what they're asking for. (ex. Your child says, "Help." You model, "You want help?")
- Say, "Help me." Child says, "Help me." You say, "Good job! Say, Help me please." etc.
- Gradually add more and more words for the child to say in order to get the toy.
- Model and prompt a few times and then give in. Don't push your child to the point of frustration.

Extension

- Extend utterance by adding on more detail and description to the utterance.
- This is similar to expansion but with more information. (ex. Your child says, "Go." You say, "Do you want to go SLOW or FAST?" Say, "Go fast!" etc.)

Follow Your Child's Lead

- Incorporate these strategies in whatever play your child is interested in and have fun!

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