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How families can help develop oral language

Engage in conversations with your child.

Describe out loud to your child what you are doing.

Listen! Listen carefully what your child says to you without rushing him along or speaking for him. Let him do the "brain work" of figuring how to say what he wants to say. Ask for clarification when you don't understand.

Don't use "baby talk" with your child all the time; use more precise and complex vocabulary when you can so they learn more vocabulary.

Create conversations about new things: pictures, objects and experiences.

Ask your child questions and encourage them to tell you about what they are thinking, learning and wondering. If you ask a question that only requires a "yes" or "no" response, they won't have to produce much language. Ask open-ended questions that have no single right answer, and that require a child to use more language.

Read books out loud.

Encourage your child to tell you when he or she doesn't understand something. The skill of asking questions is an important one for your child to learn, and it opens up opportunities for more talking together.

Play games with sounds and words.

Tell stories, sing songs and recite or create rhymes and poems. Invite your child to participate.

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