

# Raising Raiders: Speech-Language and Adaptive Skills

Deanna Ruglio, M.S., CCC-SLP &  
Kelly Huegel, M.S., CCC-SLP  
(Speech Therapists)  
Samantha Krych, OTD, OTR/L  
(Occupational Therapist)



# Means, Reasons, and Opportunities

- When young children are learning to communicate, they typically need three things:
  - 1.) A means (method) of communicating
  - 2.) Opportunities to communicate
  - 3.) Reasons to communicate
- They also need adults who respond appropriately to how they communicate



**Means - HOW**

Speech, Signs, Symbols,  
Facial Expressions, Gestures,  
Touch, Behavior, Vocalizations,  
Written Word, Eye Contact,  
Objects of Reference, Posture,  
Body Movements

**Communication**

**Reasons - WHY**

Get basic needs met;  
Express feelings;  
Get attention;  
Socialize;  
Make choices;  
Request;  
Refuse/Protest

**Opportunities - WHERE,  
WHEN &  
WITH WHOM**

Parents, Caregivers,  
Friends, Offered Choices,  
Given Time, Shared Means,  
Shared Language,  
Shared Experiences,  
Shared Interests

# Reasons for Communicating



# Functional vs Academic Vocabulary

- When young children are starting to talk, we need to help them to communicate the things that they need and want; we need to help them communicate functionally.
- Words that help children to communicate functionally are “core words.”
- These words are useful because children can use these words for a variety of communicative functions (e.g., to name things, make requests, or add a comment, etc.)
  - In recent research on core vocabulary, researchers found that...
    - In toddlers, only 23 different words made up 96% of what they said! (Banajee, 2003)
    - In students aged 5-8, 163 different words accounted for 70% of their writing samples and just 39 of those words accounted for 50%. (Clendon, 2008)
- Words that are more “academic”, such as shapes, colors, numbers, and letters, are not as helpful for young children to learn, because they do not help the child to get their wants or needs met.

# Functional Vocabulary

**Words that help children to communicate their wants and needs:**

- Core words - such as 'go', 'stop', 'more', 'open', 'help', 'want', 'yes', 'no'
- Location words (on, in, under, etc.)
- Verbs (actions words) - such as:
  - walk, eat, kick, sleep, etc.
- Foods and drinks
- Names of different toys
- Personal Core Vocabulary such as the names of family members and pet's names, favorite activities, or favorite places.

# Academic Vocabulary

**Words we can work on later:**

- Letters
- Numbers
- Colors
- Shapes

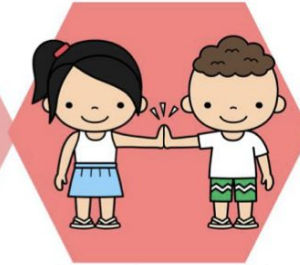
# The Benefits of Play - Play helps children to...



Develop speech & language skills



Develop motor skills (big & small body movements)



Develop social skills



Remain healthy and active



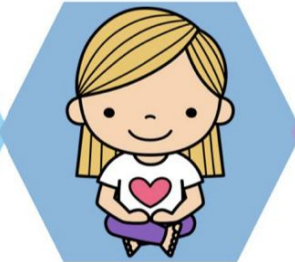
Develop problem solving skills



Develop boundaries and take risks



Cope with difficult situations



Develop an understanding of emotions



Develop relationships

# Language

- Language is the system of human communication – whether spoken or written – where words are combined in a meaningful and structured way.
- Receptive language refers to the language a person is able to understand/comprehend. For example:
  - understanding what words mean
  - learning and retaining new vocabulary
  - following directions
  - understanding concepts
- Expressive language refers to the language a person is able to produce/use. For example:
  - putting words together to form thoughts and/or phrases
  - providing appropriate label or name for people/items
  - requesting an item or assistance
  - sharing feelings/ideas about something



# Language Strategies

- Try the “Say, Show, Do” strategy to support your child’s understanding.



## **SAY**

Tell the child what they need to do.



## **SHOW**

Show the child what they need to do.



## **DO**

Give the child the opportunity to do the task/activity. Provide support if required.

# At Their Level

- Playing face to face helps your child to see your mouth and face when talking. It also helps you see each other's expressions.
- Get down to their level and play/talk face to face with your child (e.g., kneel down, lay on the floor, or sit on the floor with your child.)

## Play



Play down on the floor with your child; kneeling or lying down if needed.

## Snack



Sit together at the table so you are at the same height.

## Clothes



When helping your child to put their jacket or backpack on, crouch down to their level

# Be Specific

- It is better to model words that add content and meaning to your child's language, (i.e., saying the names of the toys, actions, locations, etc.).
- Try to avoid using vague words such as 'it', 'them', 'more', etc. Children can sometimes over-generalize the use of these, and use them in place of more meaningful words.

## Play



When commenting during play or when offering choices, use the real word. E.g., “Give the blocks to me.”

## Snack



Be specific when offering choices. E.g., “Do you want goldfish or popcorn?”

## Clothes



Use the names of the items. E.g., “put your jacket on” instead of “put this on”.

# Offer Choices

- Offering choices gives your child a reason and opportunity to communicate!
- Hold the two choices up as you name them. Let your child respond using looking, pointing, words, sounds, or gestures. Clearly name what they have chosen.

## Play



Offer your child choices of toys and books during play.

E.g., “Do you want the doll or the trucks?”

## Snack



Offer choices for drinks and snacks.

E.g., “Do you want water or juice?”

## Clothes



Offer a choice of clothes to wear.

E.g., “Do you want sweatpants or jeans?”

# Commenting

- Using simple language during play and daily routines helps children to understand what is happening. It also gives children words that they can use when they do the activity again.
- Talk about what you and/or your child are doing, looking at, playing with, touching, eating, etc. Use simple words and phrases while commenting.

## Play



Talk about what is happening in the game and/or what you and your child are playing. E.g., “Wow! You are pushing the car.”

## Snack



Talk about what you are doing and what things feel/look/taste like, etc. while your child is eating. E.g., “The apple is so sweet.”

## Clothes



Talk about the clothes your child is wearing; what they look and feel like. E.g., “Your blue sweater looks so cozy and warm.”

# Communication Temptations

- Using communication temptations gives children a reason and opportunity to communicate so they can get what they want.
- Create opportunities for your child to communicate and ask for help by putting desired items out of reach, in a hard-to-open box, or by “forgetting” to do something.

## Play



Put toys in clear, hard to open boxes, or on a shelf out of reach.

## Snack



Only give a small amount of the snack, so your child has to ask for more. Or “forget” to open the packet.

## Clothes



Make silly mistakes. E.g., “Forget” to put on their shirt/pants/socks, or put their pants on their arms.

# Copy and Add

- When we copy and add to what a child has said they hear a clear model of the words and phrases, which they may learn to use. The new words we add are more likely to be understood because they were added to something your child already said/knows.
- Repeat back what your child has said and add another word on so that they hear how to make their utterances longer.

## Play



Add a word to describe what is happening.

E.g., Child - “car”

Adult - “push the car”

## Snack



Add a word to describe the food/drink.

E.g., Child - “juice”

Adult - “yummy juice”

## Clothes



Add a word to say who it belongs to.

E.g., Child - “shoes”

Adult - “Mommy’s shoes”

# Follow the Child's Lead

- When you follow a child's lead, it shows them you are interested in the same things they are. It also helps to support their attention and interaction skills.
- Watch what your child is doing, then copy and join in. Allow them to go at their own pace. Try to avoid redirecting them if they are safe and focused.

## Play



Watch what your child is doing in play and join in. E.g., if they are pushing the cars, you start pushing the cars.

## Snack



Talk about the foods your child is eating, while they are eating it.

## Clothes



Wait and watch to see the clothes your child is reaching for first. Then talk about those as you get dressed.



# Gestures

- Gestures give clues about what we are saying. They can help give information and express our emotions.
- Use a simple gesture or sign that supports the words you are saying. Be sure to speak and gesture/sign at the same time.

## Play



If your child is pushing the car, you could do the “push” gesture. Do a “driving” gesture when the car is moving.

## Snack



Do a “drink” gesture when offering a drink. When offering an apple, pretend to take a big bite.

## Clothes



When putting clothes on, offer your child a choice and encourage them to point to what they want.

# Modeling

- Children need to learn the names for things they see/do every day as they do not automatically know them.
- Name the things that your child is playing with, looking at, doing, eating, etc.
- May also be known as 'labeling' or 'naming'.

## Play



Name the toys your child is playing with.  
Name the actions they are doing during play.  
E.g., “rocking the baby”

## Snack



Name what your child is eating or drinking.  
E.g., “pizza, banana, crackers”

## Clothes



When getting dressed, name the clothes your child is putting on.  
E.g., “shirt, socks, shoes”.

# Pausing

- Pausing gives children time to think about what you said and to respond. It also gives them time to express themselves and continue the interaction in their own way.
- Pause and wait to give your child time to listen, understand what was said, and to respond. If they don't respond, you can say the word/do the action, and continue.

## Play



When rolling the ball, wait for your child to want you to roll it to them.

## Snack



Instead of giving your child all of their snacks, wait for them to show you they want more.

## Clothes



When getting dressed, wait for your child to show they want help or want more clothes on.

# Recasting

- Some children have difficulty saying words clearly. If you repeat the words back as they should sound, they hear a clear model of the word, without being told it was wrong.
- Repeat words and phrases back as they should sound, so your child hears the words said correctly.

## Play



If your child says “tar,” you repeat back, “yes, it’s a car”.

## Snack



If your child says they “eated it,” you can repeat back, “yes, you ate the food”.

## Clothes



If your child says they’re wearing “sods,” you can repeat back, “socks”.

# Reduce Distractions

- Background noise (such as the TV or music) makes it difficult for children to listen to and concentrate on what you are saying.
- Remove things in the room that are distracting. Turn off the TV, music, or tablets in the background when no one is watching/listening to them.

## Play



Too many toys can be distracting. Try to limit the number of toys your child has access to while playing.

## Snack



When your child is eating, turn off the TV or music, so they can focus better on what they're doing.

## Clothes



To help your child focus on getting dressed, remove distractions such as tablets or phones until they are finished.

# Reduce Questions

- We use questions to see what children know, but this is difficult for children who are learning to talk. Whereas, commenting about what is happening helps children to learn new words.
- Try to avoid asking lots of questions. Instead, turn your question into a comment and talk about what is happening.

## Play



Instead of asking, “Are you rocking the baby?”, you could say, “You are rocking the baby,” or “Rock the baby.”

## Snack



Instead of “What’s that?” or “Is it yummy?”, you could say “oooo, yummy juice.”

## Clothes



Instead of saying “What are you wearing?”, you could say “You’re wearing a warm shirt,” or “You’re wearing blue socks.”

# Repetition

- Repeating the same words every time your child plays with the same toy or eats the same food helps them to associate the word with the object or action, so they learn it more easily.
- Repeat the key words over and over again in a natural way during play/daily routines.

## Play



To focus on “baby,” you could say: “baby,” “feed the baby,” “rock the baby,” “your baby,” “big baby.”

## Snack



To focus on “banana,” you could say: “eat banana,” “yummy banana,” “yellow banana.”

## Clothes



To focus on “socks,” you could say: “socks,” “warm socks,” “put on socks,” “let’s get socks,” “socks on your feet.”

# Verbal Routines

- Verbal routines create opportunities for a child to participate in activities, using sounds, words, gestures, etc.
- Say the same phrase each time you do the same activity, e.g., “morning, rise and shine!”. Pause before the end of the phrase for your child to fill in the blank, e.g., “morning, rise and...”.

## Play



You could say: “Ready, set...go!” each time you roll the ball or a car goes down the ramp.

## Snack



You could say: “bye-bye” to the plates/cups as you clean-up and put them away.

## Clothes

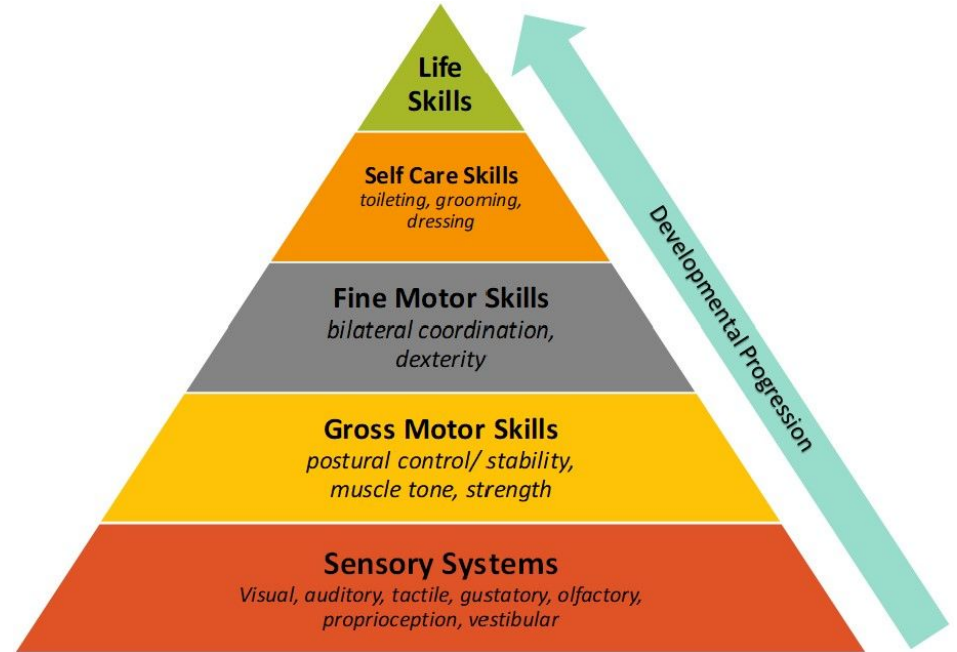


You could play peek-a-boo each time you pull their head out of their jacket, shirt, sweater, etc.



# Adaptive Skills

Adaptive skills are defined as the skills required for a person to meet their basic needs for self-care, decision-making, communicating, and learning.



# Emotional Regulation

- Optimal arousal is the level of arousal which matches the environment and activity.
- Regulation is the ability to change arousal to match the environment and the activity. Essentially it's the ability to adjust to an optimal level of arousal.
- Dysregulation is when an individual is not in an optimal state.

## Hyperarousal

- Body in fight-flight mode
- Overwhelmed, angry and out of control
- Moving quickly, surge of energy



## Window of optimal arousal

- Ready to learn and play
- Feeling safe
- Able to tolerate challenges and some stress



## Hypoarousal

- Body goes into shut down
- Zoned out, inattentive, spacey



# REGULATION

when we experience a balanced and steady state of internal energy, emotions, thoughts, and physiological processes



**EXTERNAL REGULATION:** when someone can only find and maintain regulation with direct intervention from an outside person



**CO-REGULATION:** when someone can find and maintain regulation with the support and assistance of an outside person



**SELF-REGULATION:** when someone can find and maintain regulation by themselves, as a result of countless co-regulating experiences

External Regulation

Co-Regulation

Self-Regulation

# Co-Regulation

- Use calming and soothing touches and words to calm your child's body
- Model and teach your child regulation techniques
  - Deep breathing
  - Taking a break
  - Listening to music
  - Movement
- Coach them through their emotions by labeling their feelings
- Help identify body sensations related to dysregulation
- Provide options for them to choose from to support problem solving

## Olfactory

Sense of smell  
Info. received  
through the nose

## Tactile

Sense of touch  
Info. received by  
contact through  
the skin

## Proprioception

Awareness of body  
in space and  
strength needed to  
complete actions

## Gustatory

Sense of taste  
Info. received  
through the mouth

# 8 SENSES

THE SENSORY SYSTEM

## Interoception

Awareness of  
internal bodily  
states

## Vestibular

Sense of balance  
and spatial  
orientation

## Auditory

Sense of sound  
Info. received  
through the  
ear's

## Visual

Sense of sight  
Info. received  
through the  
eyes



# Sensory Strategies

- Heavy work activities involve providing input to the child's joints and muscles.
  - Giving themselves a hug/squeeze
  - Cleaning up the desks, pushing in the chairs, and lifting and putting away books
  - Squeezing a fidget toy
  - Animal walks
  - Jump on a trampoline
  - Jumping into crashpad or pillows



# Motor Skill Development

- Motor skills are a foundational component of participating in self-care tasks, such as eating, dressing, playing, and grooming.
- Engaging in play with manipulatives helps to build hand strength, coordination, motor planning, and grasp development
  - Kinetic Sand, Play Doh, tongs, clothes pins, Squigz, etc.

## Play



Working on a vertical surface, such as a wall, to support upper extremity and core strength.

## Snack



Encourage your child to open snack containers and packages.

## Clothes



Encourage your child to participate in managing fasteners (buttons, snaps, zippers, velcro on shoes etc.)



# Sharing Responsibilities

- Allowing your child to help with daily tasks throughout the home fosters a sense of independence and responsibility
- Give your child small and manageable tasks that correspond to the responsibilities of the household and what is happening in the environment.

## Play



When cleaning up, encourage your child to put items away. You can start with specific instructions and progress to more general.

## Snack



Encourage your child to get their snack from the cabinet, gather items, or even involve them with the preparation.

## Clothes



Encourage your child to participate in dressing tasks as much as possible. Allow them to complete the task and assisting when needed.



# Building Routines

- Having daily routines assists with predictability and reliability
- Visual schedules can be helpful for your child to see what is coming next
  - It can be words, animated pictures, realistic pictures, objects, etc.
  - They can be used for morning, afternoon, and night time routines

## Play



Begin to work on social routines such as taking turns, waiting, and helping others.

## Snack



Encourage meal time routines, such as washing hands before snack time and throwing away garbage at the end.


## Clothes



Ensure enough time!  
Changing into pajamas is a great opportunity to work on dressing skills as there is typically more time.

# MORNING ROUTINE



Patrice 

DON



Go potty 



Brush teeth



Get dressed



Eat breakfast



Put on shoes



Grab backpack

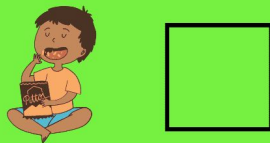


# My Night Routine

1. Get up From Nap



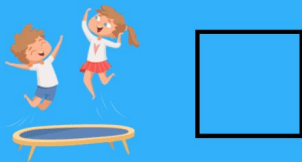
2. Get a Snack



3. Play Game



4. Go Outside



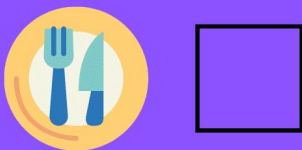
5. Sensory Play



6. Do a Chore



7. Dinner



8. Brush Teeth



9. Bedtime



# References

The information within this resource has been thoroughly researched and accessed from a range of sources which have been outlined below.

- Language facilitation strategies - These strategies are General Language Facilitation strategies. See Buschmann et al (2009) cited in Finestack, L.H. and Fey, M.E. (2013). "Evidence-Based Language Intervention Approaches for Young Talkers." In Rescorla, L.A. and Dale, P.S. (eds.). (2013). Late Talkers: Language Development, Interventions, and Outcomes. Paul H Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD.
- Means, Reasons and Opportunities Model - Adapted from work by D. Money (1997).
- Play England. (2009) Charter for Children's Play. Accessed online from <https://www.playengland.org.uk/>.
- Information based on work shared by Laura Mize, (n.d). 11 Skills Toddlers Master Before Words Emerge Handout. Retrieved online from: [https://teachmetotalk.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CHART-of-11-Skills-Toddlers-Master-Before-Words-Emerge-from-Laura-Mize-and-teachmetotalk.com\\_.pdf](https://teachmetotalk.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CHART-of-11-Skills-Toddlers-Master-Before-Words-Emerge-from-Laura-Mize-and-teachmetotalk.com_.pdf). May 2022.
- Information compiled from Sheridan, M. (2008). 'From Birth to Five Years, Children's Developmental Progress'. 3rd ed. Routledge, New York. and "The Stages of Play" identified by M. Parten (1932); information cited in a handout produced Child Development Programs (n.d). Retrieved online May 2022 from: <https://childdevelopmentprograms.ca/elearning-modules/the-power-of-play/> (see 'resources' tab).
- Information based on the work shared by The SLT Scrapbook, (2022). "Early Language Posters."
- Levels of regulation <https://www.griffinot.com/sensory-regulation-strategies-what-are-they-and-how-can-they-help-your-child/>