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Quality Time with Your Child Leads to Strong Language Skills

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With our busy and often hectic lives, parents never seem to have enough quality time with their children. The quality time (time when the child has the parent's undivided attention) parents spend with their children positively affects their development in many ways. Setting aside fifteen minutes or more a day with each child can lead to less behavior issues and improved mental, emotional, and physical health. In addition, quality time can provide opportunities to help children develop strong language and play skills. By following these fun and simple guidelines, your children will "get on the road" to good language skills!



Choosing the right activity really counts!

Letting your child choose the activity for his/her quality time develops independence. Encourage your child to choose activities that promote communication such as games, books, coloring, or playing with toys. Try to avoid activities that involve the television or computer; however, if your child insists upon choosing his/her favorite television show, some simple ideas can build language skills. Ask your child who, what, when, where, and why questions about the show. Play a memory game about what happened in the show and try to have your child put the show's events in the correct sequence. Let your child predict a logical ending to the show. Comment upon the characters, setting, and actions using descriptive words. (i.e. "Spiderman climbs the tall building and spins a long, thin web.") Let wonderful language opportunities arise from an activity your child enjoys.



Asking the right question makes all the difference!

Try to remember that the purpose of these activities is to spend time with your child. They are not a "test" to see what he/she knows. Talk openly with your child and phrase questions so you get more of an answer than "Yeah" or "Fine." Ask your child "open" questions such as, "What was the most fun thing you did today?" or "Who did you play with at recess?" These questions require more of a response than a simple "yes" or "no." You can build on your child's answers with a comment or another question, thus further expanding the conversation. Recalling the events of the day helps your child to understand and use past tense verbs, improve memory skills, and work on sequencing events. When asked the right way, simple questions lead to a great language experience.



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Noticing and Commenting: Two Techniques to Build Strong Language

Notice things your child does well and talk about what you see. Often children become intimidated when they are bombarded with questions. Instead, comment about what you and your child are doing. For example, notice what your child is doing by saying, "You are pushing the big, yellow truck." Comment on your own actions by saying, "Next, I think I'll color a pretty, blue flower." Use descriptive words whenever possible. Talk about the colors, locations, functions, or actions of the objects. Your child will often notice what you are doing and attempt to imitate you.



Have FUN!

Enjoy spending this time with your child. To avoid frustration, play at

your child's level by talking slowly with simple, short sentences. Your children will truly enjoy having your attention focused on them. They will look forward to your "quality time" every day!



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References

Jones, C. (2017) What are the benefits of spending quality time with your kids. 10 Minutes of Quality Time, accessed 5/22/2023 from <https://10minutesofqualitytime.com/what-are-the-benefits-spending-quality-time-kids/>

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