

Other Language Skills
for Preschoolers
with Autism



PRE TALKER LEVEL: The child often makes sounds but they are usually non meaningful, ie: babbling or jargon. Usually at this level, the child does not understand much language.



THINGS TO DO:

*Encourage any vocalizations by imitating your child's utterances even if they are not words. Do this in a playful manner and use lots of gestures and facial expressions.

*Encourage your child to make sounds associated with toys and activities: "vroom, vroom" while rolling a toy car; "choo, choo", while playing with a toy train; "uh, oh", when dropping an item; "peek a boo"; and animal sounds - "meow" or "woof, woof", when playing with animal toys or looking at pictures.

*Encourage vocabulary development by naming important objects, toys and people. At this point, use one or two word phrases, ie: "car", when child is playing with a toy car, or "wash hands" when washing up. The child is building his understanding even if he can't say the word.



EARLY TALKER: The child begins to use single words or phrases at this level.

THINGS TO DO:

*Praise your child and repeat his word -"bunny", in an expansion, ie: "Yes, Tommy that is a bunny!" Be sure to emphasize his word in your expansion. It is very important with our preschoolers with autism to keep our utterances very short. Extra words are just confusing noise to the child.

*You can add to the child's spoken word by adding a simple adjective, ie: when the child says "doggy", you can say "big doggy" or "Grandma's doggy."

* Occasionally, you can ask your child a simple question. However, it is very important that most adult talk is commenting. Too much questioning can inhibit a child's willingness to engage in conversation.

*Encourage your child to participate in finger plays and songs. Adults can sing the song and then omit a key word, ie: "The wheels on the bus go round and _____." Or the child can complete a familiar statement, ie: "Wash your hands at the _____." Wait expectantly for your child to complete the statement. Of course, complete it, if your child does not.

*Read with your child everyday. This may consist of just looking at pictures and making comments. Encourage your child to hold the book right side up and to turn pages. Make such comments as, "Look, it's Barney" and

"The dog says woof, woof." "Reading" every day will also encourage an interest in books when your child can actually decode words.

*Use language throughout the entire day. Talk about rolling the ball to Daddy and brushing your teeth. Your child needs many, many repetition before learning a new word or skill. Most importantly, remember that you are your child's most important teacher!

Theresa Spencer
PEDD Autism Teacher