



## ENCOURAGING YOUR CHILD TO USE SIMPLE SENTENCES

Some children need help learning to combine words into sentences. This can be supported in many ways. Working with your Speech and Language Pathologist is key. But you wouldn't be wrong to try some of these activities too. Pick one or two for you to try during the week. Doing an activity 5 times a week for 5 minutes is more beneficial than once a week for 20 minutes, but any time you can manage with your child is better than nothing.

### Joining three words together.

#### 1. Tell stories.

Tell stories using dolls, furniture and household items. One doll can hide things from her mummy doll. The adult says, "Let's put the fork under the table", "Let's put the cup on the chair." Then the mummy doll comes in and asks where the objects are hidden. Encourage your child to answer in three-word phrases; e.g., "Fork under table", "Cup on chair." Initially, your child may need lots of examples of what it required, and may need help to answer in this way, but should gradually be encouraged to answer on his/her own.

#### 2. Washing and drying teddy and doll.

Take two different dolls or a teddy and a doll. Use a sponge and towel and pretend to wash and dry them. Give your child instructions such as, "Wash dolly's arms", "Dry teddy's hair." Then ask your child to tell you what to do. S/he may respond with just one or two words. If this is the case, ask question such as, "What shall I dry? Her hands or her feet?", Breaking the language down and giving an examples of whatever level your child can understand. This can be extended by introducing other actions; e.g., using a brush as well.

#### 3. Using names.

To increase the length of what your child's saying without making it too complex, encourage your child to add names onto the beginning or end of a phrase; e.g., "More biscuit, Mummy", "Sam, sit down."

#### 4. "Give me" games.

The children or child and adult take turns to ask each other for toys and other objects. The phrase, "Give me" remains the same and the object changes; e.g., "give me car", "Give me ball", etc. Later, different names can be introduced instead of "me", e.g., "give Mary puzzle", "Give Alan car."





**5. Pretend games.**

You and your child or two children take it in turns to ask each other what to get from the shops; e.g., “Get me potatoes”, “Buy me apples”, etc. This can be varied by playing teachers, offices, restaurant, doctors and nurses, etc. The role-plays can also be built around themes to introduce or practise related vocabulary; e.g., foods, household items. As the children become more imaginative, they can play at spacemen, wizards, pirates, cops and robbers, etc.

**6. Toy play actions.**

You act out situations with toys and give a running commentary; e.g., “The doll’s kicking the ball”, “The teddy’s making a cake.” Your child is then encouraged to say or describe what is happening. If necessary, two elements can remain the same while the third changes until your child is consistent in his/her responses; e.g.,

“Dolly making cake.”

“Dolly making pictures.”

“Dolly kicking ball.”

“Teddy kicking ball.”

It’s likely that your child will respond with a one- or two-word utterance and so you must provide lots of models to give them the idea that a longer phrase is needed. Try not to correct his/her utterances; expand on them instead as this will increase their confidence rather than damaging it.

**7. Following and giving instructions.**

For example, your child tells you to hide something or to carry out certain actions. Your child could also move doll/teddy around and describe what’s happening; e.g., “Teddy go shop”, “Doll under chair.”

**8. Dressing-up.**

Your child gives instructions to another child or you with clothes or dressing-up clothes; e.g., “Put hat on”, “Take shoes off.”

**9. Describe the picture.**

You cover up a picture and start uncovering it slowly. When you child has guessed what it is, s/he describes it; e.g., “Man wearing hat”, “Lady driving car.”

**10. Chinese whispers.**

This really needs to be played in a group. You whisper a phrase to the person next to you (e.g., “The blue balloon”, “Tomatoes are red.”) That person then whispers it to the next person until every person has heard it. The last person then says what they heard. Change the order of seating so that your child gets a chance to hear the original version.

**Most of all, have fun talking and playing with your child.**



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