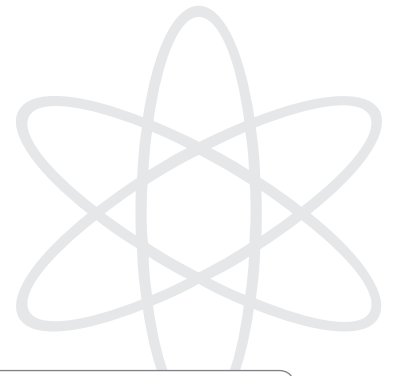


'Keeping things simple' handout 1 of 2



Think

When I am playing with my child, what is the typical number of words in his sentences?

Why might it be helpful to think about the language I use when talking to my child and to match my language to my child's?

What do I need to 'do more of', or 'do differently', in order to match my language to my child?

Why we might be tempted to use more complicated words and sentences when talking to a child:

- ✿ We may think it encourages their language development
- ✿ Some children seem to have a natural interest in language and learning new words, and we want to encourage this
- ✿ We may be concerned they are behind with their talking.

Why might it be helpful for me to match my language to my child's?

- ✿ It encourages him to use words and sentences that he can manage comfortably
- ✿ It makes my language easier for him to understand
- ✿ A child who stammers may find it harder to be fluent when he is:
 - trying to say a long, complicated sentence that is more difficult to organise in his mind
 - trying to remember more complicated words that he is not sure of.

Keeping things simple 2 of 2

What do I need to 'do more of' or 'do differently' in order to match my language to my child's?

- ✿ Sit back and listen to how your child talks
- ✿ Notice the words that he usually uses. Try to use the same sorts of words as he does rather than teach him more difficult words. For example, say he is 'kind' rather than 'thoughtful'; refer to a 'glider' as a 'plane' rather than introduce the word 'glider'.
- ✿ How many words does he put together in a sentence? Try to keep your sentences about the same length as his, or slightly longer.
- ✿ Some children ask lots of questions and are keen to find out things. Think about how much detail you need to include in your answer. Generally, keep your explanations short and simple. For example, 'It's a plane that hasn't got an engine. It works by being blown by the wind'.
- ✿ Try to talk to your child about what is taking place in the 'here and now'. Keep to his topic of conversation and talk to him about what he is doing and what he is focused on.

Parents sometimes worry that using simpler language will affect the development of their child's talking, particularly when their child is already having some difficulty in saying some things correctly. Please do not worry. Asking parents to think about their talking in this way has been found to encourage rather than discourage language development.

If your child says a word incorrectly, or misses a word out, help him by modelling how it's done rather than 'correcting' him.

'Mummy, there's a tat' 'Oh yes, there's a cat'
'He catched the man' 'He caught the man, did he?'
'Dolly _ tired' 'You're right, dolly is tired'

When you model a word or sentence for your child in this way:

- ✿ Don't ask him to say it correctly after you
- ✿ Simply let him listen to you.

This is how children learn best.

- ✿ Listen
- ✿ Use the same words as child
- ✿ Use same sentence length as child
- ✿ Keep explanations short and simple
- ✿ Keep to 'here' and 'now'.