



Cueing to Build Language in Young Children

When we cue to our children, we are providing the building blocks for language, communication, and ultimately literacy.

Exposing children to a wide variety of language from birth establishes the foundation for the development of their receptive and expressive language.

Hearing children internalize and develop language when they hear language used all around them. Similarly, ***deaf and hard of hearing children internalize and develop the language of the home when they are exposed to it through consistent cueing.*** Consistent cueing exposes them to meaningful language, enabling development of sophisticated concepts and language in order to communicate effectively, all leading to kindergarten readiness.

When starting to cue, begin with key words and simple phrases. As you develop fluency, you can cue more complex phrases and sentences. ***The more language your child acquires, the stronger their foundation will be for maximizing their communication and their reading and writing literacy potential.***

Talking [or cueing] to infants and toddlers about the real things they're doing is the most powerful, natural way for them to learn language.

~Janet Lansbury, Author

Ideas for Building Language

BABIES

- Cue consistently and with expression! Your baby will watch you more closely.
- Tell your baby you love them and name emotions, too—joy, sadness, surprise, concern, and frustration.
- Repeat whatever your child says, including their babble—repetition reinforces communication, encourages turn taking, and acknowledges them.
- Name body parts and types of clothing during bath time and when dressing them.
- Cue and act out songs and nursery rhymes.
- Narrate what you are doing throughout the day—washing dishes, loading the dishwasher, cooking, brushing your teeth, taking a bath, etc.

TODDLERS

- Describe smells, textures, and flavors—sweet, sour, delicious, nutty, crispy, mushy, tough, rough, silky.
- Use the names of all the colors in a crayon box—magenta, purple, lavender, turquoise.
- Expand language with specific names for animals, foods, furniture, clothing—Poodle, Cheerios, gouda, sofa, loveseat, rigatoni, hightops, boots.
- Cue sounds in the environment, especially with children who use cochlear implants and/or hearing aids; this helps them learn about sounds around them. Use onomatopoeia and encourage your child to cue these sounds, too—woof, moo, baa, bzzz.
- Place toys around a box and cue prepositions to identify where they are—on top, inside, next to, under, behind.
- Use complex, descriptive language—I see a Golden Retriever wagging its fluffy tail excitedly as it waits for a tasty treat.
- Identify shapes in the environment—arches, triangles, squares, polygons, ovals, cubes, pyramids, columns, and cones.
- Notice words or phrases used by hearing children and incorporate them into your conversations.
- Take field trips and use experiences to build language. For example, cue the names of animals and crops during a visit to a local farm.