

Talking Tip 17 – Good Language Input - Information Sheet

Examples of good language input:

A two year old child who is just beginning to put words together will profit from hearing short, simple sentences that describe things or events with which they are currently engaged so if the child is playing with a toy horse and comments: 'horsey jump,' you might join in with: 'Yes, the horse can jump.'

A four year old will be able to produce longer, more complex, sentences. Playing with the same toy the four year old might comment: 'I'm going to make the horse jump,' and you might join in with 'Yes, you can make the horse jump over the hedge.'

Adults as language facilitators

Adults can use a range of techniques both to encourage children to provide longer utterances and to support the use of more complex sentence constructions for example:

Open-ended questions

The use of open-ended questions can encourage children to respond in full sentences or even several sentences. It can also give you opportunities to continue a conversation. *(See next week's TalkingTip for ideas about open-ended questions.)*

Expansions

Typically the adult repeats what the child has said but adds additional informative information. For example: A two year old might offer you her doll and say 'Dolly breakfast,' and you might respond: 'Yes, dolly is eating her breakfast.' Your response values the child's contribution and provides a scaffold for the next language level.

Recasts

These are adult responses that expand on or change what the child said but maintains most or all of the child's intended meaning. They are often contingent on an error made by the child and are given as an immediate response to what the child has just said. For example if the child says 'I dranked all my milk,' the adult responds with the recast 'Yes, you drank all your milk.' Recasts can also make changes to sound for example, if the child says 'Otay,' you recast: 'Okay.' It can also make changes to vocabulary for example if the child says 'Want cup,' whilst looking at a glass, you recast: 'You want the glass.'