

THE RULES OF TALKING

How to get and maintain the child's attention:

- Get down on the child's level, as close to his ears as possible.
- Let your face and your voice tell your child that what you are doing is interesting and fun.
- Let the child actively participate. Language is best learned while doing.
- Tune into the child. Talk about what interests him.

What to talk about:

- Talk about the here and now.
- Talk about the obvious.
- At times, talk for the child – model using the words you believe will express his current wants, needs, interests.
- Put the child's feelings into words.

How to talk to a child who doesn't yet have spoken words:

- Everything has a name. Use the name.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- When you use single words, put them back into a sentence.
- Use natural gestures when you talk.
- Tell, then show, the child what you are doing.
- Use repetition. Say it again and again.
- Give the child a chance to show that he understands (the power of pause!).

How to help a child use his voice to make sounds:

- Imitate the child's repeated movement and add voice sounds to go along with the movement.
- Vary the sounds you make to the child. Make it interesting for him to listen.
- Give the child a chance to use his voice. Be a listener as well as a talker.
- Imitate the sounds the child makes.
- Reward the child when he uses his voice.

How to talk when the child begins to use words:

- Reward the child when he attempts to say a word – show him you are excited!
- Repeat the child's word and put it into a sentence.
- When the child uses telegraphic speech (Daddy go?), repeat his thought in a full sentence.
- Expand the child's vocabulary by adding new words and new sentence forms.
- When the child uses incorrect language or speech, repeat it correctly (model, don't demand him to repeat).
- When the child expresses an idea, expand his thoughts by adding new information.