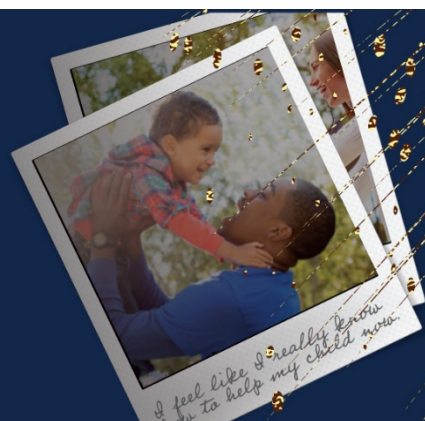


**Make meaningful memories
this holiday season**



Tips to Make the Most of Special Times Together

Language Tips

Language-building opportunities are everywhere! Here are some things you can do during everyday activities and interactions to give your child lots of chances to expand his or her language skills. These tips are drawn from Hanen's [It Takes Two to Talk®](#) guidebook.

Tip 1: For a child who communicates mainly with sounds and gestures

Imitate your child's actions. When you're sitting with your child, see what he does. If he claps his hands, clap your hands and wait to see what he does next. He might look at you, smile or giggle, clap again, or do any combination of those actions. When he does, clap again and wait to see what he does. This back and forth imitation helps your child learn about the kinds of turns he'll need to take in conversation.

Tip 2: For a child who's starting to communicate with single words

Add an idea to what your child says. For example, if you're playing with a stuffed animal and your child says "bear", you can say "that's a big bear" or "that's a fuzzy bear". This shows your child you're interested in what he has said, and also gives him a slightly more advanced model for what he could say.

Tip 3: For a child who communicates in sentences

Respond to what your child says with comments that are on the same topic. For example, if you are on a walk with your child, and he says, "Look, a snow man", you could say "That snow man has a big carrot for a nose!" By responding to your child with comments that are on topic, you are letting your child know that what he says is important to you. This will encourage him to keep communicating!

Tip 4: When you are trying to share information with your child

Get face to face when you have something to say, like “Put away your blocks” or “Mommy is going out for a while, and Jeannie will look after you”. This will make it easier for your child to pay attention and understand you. Get face to face by bending down or sitting on the floor to get to your child’s level.

Social Communication Tips

If you have a young child with social communication difficulties or autism, there’s a lot you can do while interacting and having fun together to encourage your child’s communication development. These tips are drawn from Hanen’s [More Than Words®](#) and [TalkAbility™](#) guidebooks.

Tip 1: If your child is learning to interact with you

Add some actions and gestures to his favorite songs! When you’re singing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”, you can put him on your lap and rock him back and forth as you sing. After you’ve gone through the song a couple of times, stop singing and rocking during the middle of the song (for example, right before you sing “merrily merrily”). This encourages him to send you a message (for example, by wriggling his body, making a gesture or giving you a sound or a look) to let you know he wants you to sing and rock some more.

Tip 2: If your child can interact easily with you

Try doing something out of the ordinary and then waiting to see if you get a reaction. For example, when getting your child dressed, put his sock on his hand, and wait to see if he communicates to you with a word, a comment, a look, or a gesture to let you know that you made a mistake. Don’t be afraid to do something silly – the best interactions happen when having fun!

Tip 3: If your child can have short conversations with you

Encourage him to think about what he likes and how it’s different from what others like. While shopping for gifts, help your child think about what others in their family would want by saying something like “Sally really likes dogs, so what present do you think she would like to get?” To help your child compare this to his own preference, you could say something like “Sally likes dogs, and you really like tigers. How would you feel if someone gave you a toy dog? How would Sally feel?”

Tip 4: If your child has conversations but sometimes gets stuck on a particular topic

Give him visual and auditory cues to let him know that a topic change is coming. For example, if your child is talking to you about superheroes for a very long time, tell him “You can tell me two more things about superheroes, and then we’re going to talk about the birthday party we are going to tomorrow” while holding up two fingers. The visual cue will help remind your child what he needs to do.

Literacy tips

To be prepared for school, all young children need a solid foundation of early literacy skills. These skills include print knowledge, story comprehension, vocabulary, and sound awareness. Here are some tips, drawn from Hanen’s [ABC and Beyond™](#) and [I’m Ready!™](#) guidebooks, to build your child’s early literacy skills during book reading and other daily activities.

Tip 1: Build your child’s vocabulary

When you come across a new word in a book, explain what the word means and use actions, gestures, facial expressions or sounds to demonstrate its meaning. For example, if you come across the word “exhale”, you could say, “‘Exhale’ means breathing out and making a loud noise”, and then breathe out to show your child. Explaining and showing are powerful ways to build his understanding of new words.

Tip 2: Turn book reading into a conversation

When you’re reading with your young child, pause and wait to see what your child is interested in and then make a comment about it. For example, if you’re reading *Good Night, Zoo*, and your child points to the mouse and says “mouse”, you could say “that’s a tiny mouse” and then wait to see what your child does next. Encouraging conversation during book reading helps your child understand stories better because he can ask questions, make comments and relate the events in the book to his own experiences.

Tip 3: Point out print

While at the grocery store, point out the sign in front of an aisle to show your child that the print helps us find what we’re looking for. For example, “Look, that sign says ‘Pasta’. That tells us that the spaghetti is in this aisle.” This will help your child understand that print has meaning and purpose.

Tip 4: Help your child tune in to the different sounds that letters make

Rhyming is a great way to draw your child's attention to the individual sounds that letters make. While in the car, sing silly songs where you have to make up rhymes or start replacing words in familiar songs with rhyming words. For example, if you're singing "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star", you could sing "twinkle, twinkle little **car**" and see if your child notices the change. Then you can explain that "car" and "star" sound the same at the end because they rhyme.

About The Hanen Centre

Founded in 1975, The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization with a global reach. Its mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those with developmental challenges such as autism, and those who are developing typically.

For more information, please visit www.hanen.org.

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