

Highlight Your Language

Helping Your Child to Learn and Use Words



As a parent of a young child who is having difficulty understanding and using words, you want to know what you can do to help. **Highlight Your Language** is a strategy you can use to help your child understand and use words by making the important words stand out! Think of this like using a highlighter pen, which makes the important words on a page stand out. When you **highlight your language** it's not just **what** you say that matters, but **how** you say it!

To highlight your language, use the Four S's and Repeat, Repeat, Repeat:

1. Say Less

Keep your sentences short, simple but grammatically correct. **Saying less** makes it easier for your child to understand and remember the words.

Uh-oh, your pants...are **dirty**!

Uh-oh

2. Stress

Make the important words stand out by saying them a little louder or with more emphasis. **Stressing** a word draws your child's attention to the important word or words.

3. Go Slow

Slowing down your speech gives your child more time to understand what you're saying. Use a natural rhythm when you speak at a slightly slower pace.

4. Show

Use an action, or a gesture, or a sign, or point to a picture or the object when you talk to your child. When you **show**, your child can see what you are talking about which helps them to understand the word.

Repeat the Important Words

Children need to hear words many times before they can use them. The more often you repeat a word, the easier it becomes for your child to learn it.

Think of it as "**Repeat, repeat, repeat.**" Try to repeat the important word **3 - 5 times** during an interaction. But don't say them all at once. Say them naturally during your conversation and remember to repeat the word in other situations too.

Highlighting Your Language Starts with...

Observe, Wait and Listen™ (OWL™)



Here's how it works...

Get **face to face**. Be at your child's eye level so you can see each other's faces.

Then, **Observe** your child, pay close attention to what they are doing and communicating about.

Wait without saying anything. Lean in and look interested for up to **10 seconds**. This lets your child **start** the conversation - which is what you want!

Listen to your child's message so you can respond to what they have communicated about.

Once your child communicates, respond immediately by saying something that is directly related to their message - and **highlight** the important words using the **4S's and repeat, repeat, repeat**.

Imagine you are outside, and your child sees a bird. You **Observe**, **Wait and Listen** and your child points to the bird and says "bird". You could say, "Yes, that bird is **flying** away!" - stressing the word "flying" as you point to the bird. Then wait for your child to respond.

Your child might say something else about the bird. For example, they might say, "bye bird". Then respond by saying something that directly relates to what your child said and **highlight** the important words. For example, "Yes, the bird is **flying** back to its nest."

Each time you **highlight your language**, you give your child another opportunity to notice, understand, and eventually say the words themselves. It's okay if your child does not respond or repeat any of your words. They are learning from what you say and how you say it.



Highlight Your Language is a strategy from the Hanen It Takes Two to Talk® guidebook. Learn more about how this guidebook can help you support your child's communication at www.hanen.org/ITTTguidebook.

