

Yackity Yack!

speech and language development

From those first soft cooing sounds to runaway sentences, it is fascinating to listen as our child begins to talk. And, though speech development is a natural process, it doesn't happen in a vacuum. Speech and language are learned behaviors. Your child must have a teacher to learn to speak and that "teacher" is you!

Encouraging Speech-Language Development

Remember, the groundwork for speech is being laid down from birth. Copy your newborn's sounds, sing to her and talk to her about her world. That early communication with your baby not only encourages development of speech and language, but helps strengthen the bond between mother, father and baby.

"Take every opportunity throughout the day to talk about what's going on," says Kathy Soland, speech-language pathologist at TherapyWorks in South Tulsa.

"Talk to them in the car while you are driving, at bath time, when they are getting dressed. There are so many language enriched activities that happen throughout the day. Use everyday situations to talk about smells, colors, and how things feel, look and taste—hot, cold, wet, dry, dirty, clean."

Reading to your children is also vitally important, not only to their speech/language development, but to their interest and ability to read later on. You can begin reading



to your child as early as 6 months of age or younger. "Textured books, pop-up books and rhyming books are great," says Soland.

Soland also encourages parents to follow the child's lead. "Parents tend to ask too many questions and anticipate what the child will say. By allowing the child to take the lead, you will find out what the child is interested in and the child has more opportunity to use his or her creativity."

She encourages parents to ask

open ended questions. For example, if the child is pretending that his or her doll is crying, instead of asking, "Is the baby crying because he wants to eat?" (a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no) the parent might say, "I wonder why the baby is crying?" This question allows the child to think about and come up with an answer.

"Pausing is also important," says Soland. "A lot of the time when we are communicating with kids, we don't allow them time to

think about what we are asking. Allow them time to figure out, 'What do I want to say and how am I going to say it.' It may take them some time to pull all that together."

If You Think Your Child Has a Problem

"Parents are very intuitive regarding their own children. If you think your child is not doing the things the other kids are doing at that age, talk to other family members, teachers or your pediatrician," says Speech Pathologist Alecia Fischer, clinic coordinator at the OSU-Tulsa Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic.

Fischer encourages parents to take advantage of the free screenings that are available in the Tulsa area. At the OSU-Tulsa Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, parents can call and set an appointment for a free screening. "Our screenings are offered three afternoons a week and mornings upon request," says Fischer. "Screenings only take about 10 minutes and will tell if your child is on track or if further testing needs to be done." At the clinic your child will also receive a free hearing screening.

"I would much rather have a child come in to be evaluated and be able to say, 'Oh, they are right on target,' than to wait and have them come in later than they really need to," says Soland.

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Speech-language & Hearing Screenings

TherapyWorks, 7608 E. 91st St. Ste, 100, Tulsa. Speech/language evaluations and oral motor and feeding evaluations. Free. By appointment. Call 663-0606.

Mary K. Chapman Center for Communication Disorders, 2820 E. 5th St., on TU Campus. Free. By appointment on Fridays. Call 631-2504.

OSU-Tulsa Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, North Hall 391, 700 North Greenwood Ave. Free. By appointment, afternoons (mornings upon request). Call 918-594-8573 or slpservices@okstate.edu.

Tulsa Health Department Child Guidance, 315 S. Utica. By appointment. Nominal Fee. Sliding Scale. Call 594-4720.

What is Normal?

Different sounds are attained by children at different ages. OSU-Tulsa Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic offers the following guidelines:

95% of children correctly pronounce these sounds by the following ages:

2 years	p, m, d, n, w, h
3 years	b, t, k, g
4 years	f, y, ng
5 years	v, l, s, z, sh, ch, j
6 years +	zh, r
7 years	th

Ways to Encourage Clear Speech

- Use short sentences but don't use baby talk
- Model correct speech
- Pronounce words slowly and correctly for the child to hear and imitate
- Look at your child when you are both talking
- Let the child watch your face, lips, and tongue as you form sounds and words, prolonging the speech sound the child has difficulty saying (for example, "Where is your ssock?")
- Repeat new words and sounds over and over, and use them often in your conversation with the child.
- Make a scrapbook with your child; cut out and past pictures of objects the child learns to say or recognize.
- Give cues or prompts such as "Try that name again," or "It's not 'boap,' it's soap."
- Praise your child when sounds are correct, especially if the sounds were previously difficult for the child.

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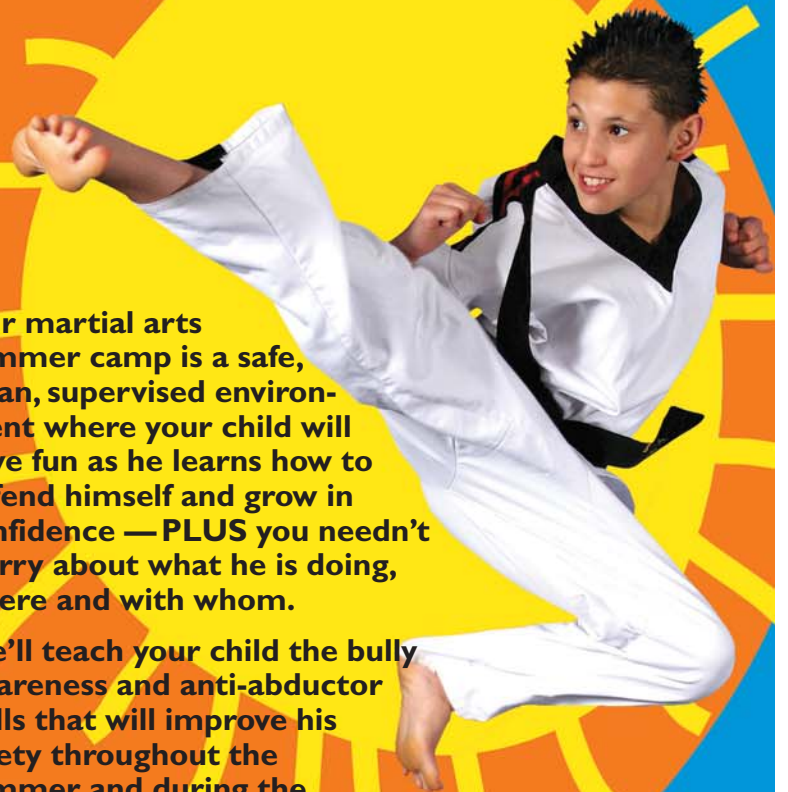
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