

# 10 TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE



Language is one of the most important tools we have as human beings. It not only helps us to get our needs met, but also allows us to express emotions and build bonds with others. As the newcomer children in your care are developing their language skills, there are many strategies you can use to support and encourage them.

## **1. LISTEN!**

Listening to children is very important. Children feel valued and important when adults listen and respond to their needs and interests. Children begin to see the power of speech which will help encourage them to use it more often.

## **2. USE SIMPLE WORDS**

Young children learn the names of objects and actions first. Talk with them using whole sentences and real words. Keep the language simple and allow time for children to respond.

## **3. TEACH A LITTLE AT A TIME**

Learning a language happens slowly. Children need to hear a word in context about 44 times before they can recall and use it accurately.

## **4. SCAFFOLD YOUR LANGUAGE**

When speaking with young children it is important to add animation, gesture, pictures and real objects to reinforce your words or meaning.

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CARE FOR  
NEWCOMER  
CHILDREN  
RESOURCE  
SERIES

## 5. TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Interacting with a child is important no matter what you are doing. The temptation may be to just “get the job done” and so language diminishes with routine tasks, yet routines provide an ideal opportunity for interactions.

## 6. PROVIDE A NEED TO TALK

It is not surprising that children who have their needs anticipated readily by others begin speaking later. If children can grunt, point or even look at things and have them brought to them, then there becomes little incentive to speak.

## 7. ADD TO WHAT CHILDREN ARE SAYING

Correcting speech using full sentences and grammatical accuracy will help the child learn rhythms of speech which is the first stage of learning speech. When children say, “Mommy go”, you can expand this to, “Yes, mommy is gone. She’s coming back very soon.”

## 8. ASK CHILDREN QUESTIONS

Asking open-ended questions that are meaningful and age appropriate will help children to want to reply. If children are preverbal you can describe their actions, e.g. “You opened the door.”

## 9. READ AND TELL STORIES

Babies and children enjoy stories. Listening to stories helps children in many ways. It helps them to feel the rhythm of a language, use their imagination, develop empathy, and expand their understanding of the world.

## 10. REMOVE DISTRACTIONS

When the radio and television are on in the background, or when you are excessively using your cell phone, children learn to tune out sounds. This can impede language development. Excessive noise also can distract children from listening to you. Singing does help children hear the full sound of words since it is usually slower than speech and there is much repetition. It is also enjoyable to children, even if you can’t sing in key!

Visit [cmascanada.ca](http://cmascanada.ca) for more resources to support your work with newcomer families



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