

Singing and Playing Games: Fun Times With Your Children AND Language-Building Opportunities



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Most children love spending time with their parents. They especially enjoy it when you spend the time playing games or singing songs! Did you know that these fun activities help build numerous language skills too? Use the following suggestions to have some fun with your children and build their language skills at the same time!

► Sing Your Way to Better Language

Sing repetitive songs to your children for a wonderful and fun activity that helps them learn about concepts, categorization, associations, sequencing, and new vocabulary.

For example, “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” teaches children about farm animals and the sounds they make. Let your children choose the animals they’d like to sing about. This helps children practice naming objects in a category and associating the different sounds with the correct animals. Change the song to “Old MacDonald Had a Zoo” to include different animals with different animal sounds (i.e., tiger, monkey, elephant, and others).

For a challenge, try singing “Old MacDonald Had a Fruit Store.” Let the children decide what objects to use and what to sing about. For example, they can sing, “And at his store, he had an apple, E-I-E-I-O. With a shiny, red peel; a shiny, red peel; here a peel, there a peel; everywhere a peel, peel.” Other good songs to sing with your children include the following: “The Wheels on the Bus,” “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” and “Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.”

► I Spy Good Language Skills

Another good game to play with children is “I Spy.” This game helps develop reasoning, describing, and listening skills. Use colors, sizes, uses, or positions and ask for more descriptive words as your child’s skills progress.

Take turns giving clues and guessing the answer. For example:

1. "I spy something blue."
2. "I spy something round."
3. "I spy something you use to wash dishes."
4. "I spy something in the sky."
5. "I spy something small, red, with a peel."

Play this game in the car, outside, or at home. If your child has trouble guessing the answer, offer hints to help. For more of a challenge, use the variation of this game, "I am thinking of something..."

► **Listen and Help, But Don't Correct**

Children who are learning language often use their new language skills incorrectly. They may say the wrong word or mix up the words in their sentences. Playing games presents a great time to notice these errors and help them learn the correct way to use language. Sometimes, the best way to help them learn is by saying the sentence again, but saying it correctly. For example, if your child says, "Daddy forgetted his book," you could respond by saying, "Yes, Daddy forgot his book." Place emphasis on the corrected word by saying it slower and louder, but try not to obviously correct your child.

Making errors like this is normal for children who are just developing their language skills. Often the best and easiest way to help your child figure out language rules is by setting a good example.

Have fun playing and learning with your children!