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Read Your Way to Strong Language Skills

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Do you have or work with children who experience difficulty naming or giving more information about pictured objects? If so, try these simple, language-building strategies while reading with your child.

Reading is a great opportunity to strengthen language skills. As a parent or teacher, you can strengthen object and picture naming by following these simple guidelines.



- Try not to read the text "word-for-word." Wonderful language opportunities arise simply by looking at the pictures in a book and "ad-libbing" the text.



- When looking at a page, name the objects pictured on that page (i.e. ball, table, and puppy). As children begin to recognize the objects, expand each by adding descriptive words, or adjectives (i.e. yellow ball, long table, and small puppy).



- Children with language difficulties often become stressed or frustrated when asked to name objects. When reading a story with these children, give them hints to help them name objects and provide details. Instead of saying, "What is this?" try saying, "Is this a shoe or a ball?" This gives the child a choice of two, decreasing the anxiety often felt by children who have trouble naming objects. If this still poses difficult for the child, simplify it further by stating, "Is this a ball?" while pointing to the correct object. If the child doesn't answer, provide the correct response by saying, "Yes, it is a ball?"



- If children progress past choosing an object from two, but still have difficulty with direct naming, try saying, "Look, a red _____!" while pointing to the object. This technique, called cloze, allows a child to take the clues you give from the sentence's context and provide the correct answer. If a child has difficulty, provide another clue by giving the first sound of the desired word. (i.e. "Look, a red b _____!") Again, this task may be too difficult for some children. If you see or sense any frustration, try adding more details. For example, you could say, "It's something that you throw, kick, or roll. It's a b _____!" Provide the child with the correct answer if he or she is still having trouble.

Children with language delays and disorders often avoid looking at books because, in the past, the activity has been frustrating or stressful. Teach these children that reading is a wonderful opportunity! Be their guide, but above all, be patient and enjoy your time together.

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