



TIPS FOR MY THREE YEAR OLD

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Let's talk about some specific strategies to help a three year old who isn't quite hitting their language milestones.

Please remember all children develop at their own pace. This post is designed to help your child, if you do have any concerns. It may also be helpful for parents who are out of ideas on how to continue to help develop language.



TARGET SKILL	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE	
<p>Follow 2-step unrelated directions (e.g. “get your shoes and put your hat on)</p>	<p>Give your child opportunities to follow 2-step instructions. Ask your child to help set the dinner table, unload the dishwasher, etc. Provide unusual instructions during these tasks e.g. ‘clap your hands and then put a spoon away’.</p> <p>If testing whether they can follow the instruction, ensure that you are not accompanying the instruction with a gesture or eye-gaze that may support understanding of the instruction. This can be used as a support strategy however.</p>
<p>Understand concepts (e.g. big, little, fast, slow)</p>	<p>Use the child's toys to talk about these concepts and demonstrate their meaning. For example, have 2 different size measuring cups. Talk about which one is bigger / smaller. Use them to pour water (on some toy animals and talk about them being wet. Use a towel to dry the toys and compare the feeling of wet and dry. Then make the animals have a race and see which one is fast / slow.</p>
<p>Recognise simple named colours</p>	<p>Play games that require your child to sort objects based on colours. Each time, name the colour. Point out different coloured cars on the road; talk about the colours of the fruit and vegetables at the shops.</p>

TARGET SKILL	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
<p>Understand 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions</p>	<p>Ask your child simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions. Provide choices e.g. 'is it grandma or grandpa?' Offer the appropriate answer if your child is unable to respond.</p> <p>A 3 year old is expected to respond to the question with an appropriate word (e.g. a person's name if asked a 'who' question; a specific location if asked a 'where' question. If your child tends to respond with 'there', it may indicate some difficulties with vocabulary use.</p>
<p>EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE</p>	
<p>Use 3-4 word sentences with a vocabulary of about 500 words</p>	<p>Support your child's language development by adding one more key word. For example: Child: big lion You: it's a big hungry lion (note the addition of grammar too. You are adding 'hungry' as the key word PLUS any appropriate grammar).</p> <p>Ensure you are adding a range of word types when building on sentences. Use describing words (including colour, size, feelings, etc.), action words, location words, etc.</p>
<p>Begin to use basic grammar (e.g. 'ing', 'ed' and plural 's')</p>	<p>Ensure you are always using correct grammar. It is often cute when a 2 or 3-year old uses simplified grammar. However, if we don't provide the correct models, our children are less likely to use them. Don't make a big deal of any errors – just say the sentence back with the correct grammar. For example: Child: look, I jump You: wow, you jumped so high! Well done.</p>
<p>Talk about things that are not in the room / happened in the past</p>	<p>Ask your child about their day at day-care or an outing with friends / grandparents / aunties & uncles. Help support the conversation with asking 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions rather than yes / no questions.</p>

TARGET SKILL	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
<p>Enjoy telling stories and asking questions</p>	<p>At this age, a child's story will typically have no organisation.</p> <p>Encourage your child to tell you about their day at the farm or about their favourite book. Use toys to act out stories.</p>
<p>Ask "who", "what" and "where" questions e.g. "What that?", "Where mummy?"</p>	<p>Encourage your children to ask questions and respond to them appropriately. Play hiding games that encourage your pre-schooler to ask what you found / where you found it.</p>
<p>Be understood by unfamiliar adults 60% of the time</p>	<p>Clarity can be impacted by a number of factors including sound errors, a child's volume being too soft and / or children talking too fast.</p> <p>If volume or speed are issues, encourage your pre-schooler to adjust their rate or volume accordingly. Feel free to contact me for a fun visual sheet that can help children understand these concepts better.</p>
<p>Use a range of sounds in words: p, b, m, t, d h, w, n, y, k, g, ng, f</p>	<p>Your pre-schooler should be correctly using most of these sounds in different positions (start, middle, end) of a word. Some errors are considered to be age-appropriate whilst other are not developmental. If unsure, please contact a speech pathologist to get a sense of whether there is a need for concern.</p> <p>Always say words back correctly to your pre-schooler and do not put pressure on him / her to repeat the word/s.</p>
<p>Play begins to represent less familiar events (e.g. shopping, doctor)</p>	<p>Ensure your pre-schooler has toys that enable play and language development. Pretend play toys (e.g. tea sets, doctor's kit, dress-ups, Duplo blocks, etc) are all great ways to expand a toddler's imagination, while developing their play and language skills. Play with your child and demonstrate how the toys can be used to pretend.</p>

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Consider a hearing test, especially if your toddler has a history of recurrent ear infections and / or colds.
- Get down to your child's level ensuring that they can see your eyes and face.
- I frequently catch my mum telling my son "let's go wash hands" with me repeating back 'go and wash **your** hands'. While it's cute at this age, we don't want a 12 year old saying 'I need to wash hands'. Please remember to use grammatically correct sentences with your child, even if the sentences are short.
- Use lots of specific praise when your child makes any attempts. This tells the child that you are listening and exactly what skill you are aiming for and gives them a reason to try again.
- Read to your child as often as possible. Books are a great way to teach new vocabulary and concepts. You don't need to stick to the story in the book. Use the opportunities to ask and answer questions.
- Remember to ask open-ended questions that cannot be responded to with a yes / no response.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

- Uses short sentences (2-word phrases)
- Doesn't understand / follow 2-step instructions
- Does not play with other children
- Does not respond to questions
- Doesn't ask questions
- Is difficult to understand by less familiar people

HOW WE CAN HELP

If you find these strategies are not helping your child progress, you may want to contact a speech pathologist. At Chatterbox Speech Pathology, based in Stirling, we can provide lots of practical strategies to help support language development. Our assessments provide insightful information about the things your little one is great at and areas that we can support. We make therapy fun for the child and give parents realistic goals to consolidate at home with practical ideas on how to develop the goals. We provide parent coaching to increase your ability to support your child.



If you would like any further information, please feel free to contact Kunali on 0405 176 931 or email me: info@chatterboxwa.com.au.

I hope you have found some useful information in this post. Please feel free to share this with any friends and family who may get some worthwhile information from the post too. Next week, we will discuss what to do for your four year old. Have a great week!

