



TIPS FOR MY FOUR YEAR OLD

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Four year olds are typically quite chatty and have a fair amount of language. Here are some tips to help your preschooler hit his / her 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 3 step instructions (e.g. get the ball, give it to mummy and put the plate in the sink)</p>	<p>Give your child opportunities to follow 3-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, put a spoon away and then give me a high 5'.</p> <p>Your pre-schooler should be able to follow the complete instruction, in the correct order. You should be able to provide the instruction all at once rather than pausing while each step is completed.</p>
<p>Understand more concepts (e.g. heavy, light, short, tall)</p>	<p>Continue to develop your child's understanding of concepts through increased exposure and by explaining what the concepts mean.</p>
<p>Understand colour & shape names</p>	<p>Play games that require your child to sort objects based on colours and shapes. Each time, name the colour and encourage your child to name the shape / colour.</p>

TARGET SKILL	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
Can sort objects / pictures into categories	Group objects into categories e.g. clothes, food, animals, vehicles, furniture, etc. You can use junk mail, toys, real objects or printed pictures. Also talk about the features of the objects: sounds; colours; how you use them; where you find them. Ask your pre-schooler to find the picture or object that does not belong. For example, a dog does not belong with the vehicles because it is an animal.
Understand “why”, “how”, & “how many” questions	Talk about why and how things happen. For example, when driving to school, ask your pre-schooler why you stopped at the red light; what might happen if you didn’t stop; how would a cyclist feel if he had an accident; etc. Please feel free to <u>contact me</u> for more specific questions.
EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	
Use lots of words, about 900, usually in four to five-word sentences	Support your child’s language development by adding one more key word. For example: Child: big yellow lion You: the big yellow lion is fast (note the addition of grammar too. You are adding ‘fast’ as the key word PLUS any appropriate grammar). Children are expected to use a range of descriptive words to convey shape, size, texture
Use correct grammar with occasional mistakes, such as "I falled down"	Ensure you are always using correct grammar. 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 jump ed so high! Well done.
Use connector words such as ‘because’ and ‘but’ to make longer sentences	As, above, model the use of these word types, emphasising the joining word. For example: Child: I have a banana. I have apple. You: You have a banana and an apple.

TARGET SKILL	HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD
	<p>Be mindful of your pre-schooler over-using a joining word e.g. ' I went to the zoo. And I saw the monkey. And then I had lunch. And we went home. And it was so much fun.) or using an incorrect joining word (e.g. I ate a pear so I am hungry).</p>
<p>Ask many questions, usually 'what' or 'who' questions</p>	<p>Encourage your child to ask questions and respond to them appropriately.</p>
<p>Tells stories about a topic</p>	<p>Pick a range of topics and make up stories with each other. At this age, children are expected to have some sequence in the story but no plan</p>
<p>Speak clearly enough to be understood by most people</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, l, s, z, sh</p>	<p>Your pre-schooler should be correctly using most of these sounds in different positions (start, middle, end) within 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 is imaginative and involves the use of language</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

- Make silly sentences using pictures. For example, put a cat on the seesaw and make up a sentence about the picture. Discuss what's funny about this picture and discuss things such as what might happen to the cat; why this situation is un/likely to occur; etc.
- Read books with your pre-schooler. Talk about the story with your child. Help him / her retell the story, or act it out. Talk about your favourite part/s of the story and discuss why. Don't be afraid to deviate from the words of the book – get creative and generate your own stories based on the pictures. Talk about how the story might end / start differently.
- Ask open-ended questions that will encourage your child to use longer sentences. For example, rather than 'did you go swimming?', ask "where did you go today?"
- Encourage your pre-schooler to engage in pretend play such as going to the dentist. Use dress-ups to make it fun.
- Help develop your child's pre-literacy skills by discussing how words rhyme and playing rhyming games. Talk about the sound that a word starts with (yup, you guessed it – a dose of 'I spy with my little eye'...).

CAUSE FOR CONCERN:

- Is difficult to understand by other people
- Demonstrates limited or no use of grammatical elements (e.g. verb endings 'ed' and plurals)
- Is unable to give a clear account of an event that occurred while you were not present (e.g. tell about a school excursion)

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 will be last of this series, following which we will get into specific areas of language and literacy.

