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Talk Your Child Clever

By Susan du Plessis

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by: **Susan du Plessis**

Most parents can hardly wait for their baby to say its first word. This usually happens between the nine months and a year. From about two years, the child should be able to use simple phrases, and by three he should be able to use full sentences. By four, he should be fully able to talk, although he may still make grammatical errors. By five, he should have acquired basic language.

There is little doubt that language acquisition is one of the key milestones in early childhood development. Much of a child's future social and intellectual development hinges on this milestone. A language delay can lead to isolation and withdrawal, and to learning difficulties and poor academic performance. Recent research has revealed a dramatic link between the development of spoken language and written language among children, and the importance of language acquisition to basic reading skills.

Many parents believe that the term "language development" implies that the child's acquisition of language is an automatic process. This, however, is not the case. There is nothing that any human being knows or can do that he has not learned. This is especially true of language acquisition.

The child begins to learn language from the day he is born. From the very first moment it is the parents responsibility to lay a proper foundation that will enable the child to acquire adequate language skills. Just like parents must ensure that a child follows a healthy and balanced diet for optimal physical development, they must take steps to ensure optimal language development.

HOW LANGUAGE IS ACQUIRED

Parents should start talking to their little baby from the day he is born. Some mothers are by nature quiet and reserved. Others have the unfortunate idea that it is foolish to talk to their babies, knowing that they do not understand. The mother, who does not talk continually while feeding, bathing and dressing her baby, is laying the foundation for a late talker.

Talk Your Child Clever

The baby learns language in one way only, and that is by hearing language as the parents talk and talk to it. The more a parent can talk to a child, often repeating the same words, the same phrases, the same structures over and over, the sooner the child will learn language.

An important thing to note here is that by the time a baby is about nine months old he should be able to understand simple words and commands. He may perhaps also be able to say a few simple words already. Invariably, however, one finds that the baby understands much more than he is able to say. In fact, this remains so of any person throughout his life. One is always able to understand more of any language, even ones mother tongue, than one is able to use in active speech. This is even more so of any second or third languages that a person is able to speak.

This shows that we have two more or less separate masses of language knowledge, our **PASSIVE** knowledge (also called receptive language) on one hand, and our **ACTIVE** (expressive language) on

the other. When we listen or read, we make use of our passive vocabulary, and when we speak or write, of our active vocabulary.

An important thing to note here is that the child's passive vocabulary came into being through constant and continual repetition of words, phrases or structures. Once a word, phrase or structure has been repeated often enough, it also becomes part of the baby's active vocabulary. This shows that the active vocabulary can only be improved **VIA** the passive. Research has shown that a child who is just beginning to talk must hear a word about 500 times before it will become part of his active vocabulary. Long before that it will already form part of his passive vocabulary. This means that parents should create as many opportunities as possible in which their baby can hear them talk.

THE SECRET OF READING TO YOUR CHILD

Parents should read to their children as often as possible. The secret, however, which will lead to optimal language development, is to read the **SAME** stories over and over and over.

In the "good old days" there was not the abundance of storybooks that there is today. Parents were compelled – it was also part of the child-rearing traditions – to tell over and over to their children the few stories that they knew, or to read over and over to their children the few books in their possession. They also spent a lot of time teaching their children rhymes and songs. As I discovered for myself through my own son, this over and over repetition of the same stories and rhymes was extremely beneficial for the acquisition of language. In fact, I took this tradition to the extreme, exposing my son to only **ONE** book for nearly two years.

Soon after my elder son, Gustav, was born, I bought him a book with the story of Pinocchio. The book was aimed at four-year-olds. Except for talking to him continually, I started to read to him from this book when he was only two or three months old – as often as I could, over and over and over. I found this tedious, of course. Gustav, however, loved it, and the results of this experiment made all my efforts worthwhile. Not only did he start talking much sooner than most children do, but when he was just over two years, he could recite nearly all the pages from Pinocchio. When turning to a new page, one only had to read the first word or two on that page and he would recite the rest of the page like a parrot. In

itself this may seem quite useless, but of great importance was that the vocabulary in this book soon became part of his everyday speech. In terms of language development, he was soon miles ahead of his age group. In fact, to this day, his vocabulary and his ability to speak with clarity are quite astounding.

When a child is a bit older, one should start teaching him nursery rhymes. Research has shown that knowledge of nursery rhymes among three-year-olds was a significant predictor of later prereading skills even after the children's IQ and their mothers' educational levels were partialled out.

While an apple a day keeps the doctor away, talking forever makes your child clever!

Susan du Plessis (BD; BA Hons) is an author of five books on learning and learning disabilities.

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Tips On Coping With A Child With ADHD

By Tina Barraclough

I am a mother of a 6 year old son who was recently diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I am by no means an expert on this subject – I am only a mom who struggles to help my ADHD child.

Listed below are some tips I have learned from experience along the way.

1. Life with a child who has ADHD has its challenges, but remember that your child is not acting up because they want to be difficult – they can't help it. So it's up to you to stay calm and avoid arguing with your child. It helps to keep the daily routine and home life as calm, predictable and stress-free as possible.
2. Accept that there is a problem, whether or not you accept the diagnosis. Denial will not help you or your child.
3. Be prepared to feel guilty about the time you spend with your ADHD child compared to the time you spend with your other children. Other family members may start to feel like you are neglecting them.
4. Take care of yourself – it is often challenging to raise a child with ADHD. Caring for your own physical and mental health is an important part of helping your child, and will provide you with the necessary energy when you need it the most.
5. The most important thing is NEVER punish your child while you are angry. Take a breather away from the child before you hand out any punishment to your child. Discipline that belittles or shames a child can truly be harmful.

6. Start rewarding instead of punishing. You've probably already discovered how useless it is to try to punish your child when he 's running around or tuning you out. What I have found with my child is how well he responds to simple rewards. Praise good behavior immediately ("You brushed your teeth, just like I asked you to! Thanks so much!") and give your child a reward that pleases him such as a special snack or extra time to watch TV, for example. The reward should be something he can enjoy right away; kids with ADHD don 't like to wait.

7. Realize you are not alone. There are many parents out there who have a child with ADHD. If you need to talk to someone, you can find support groups out there. Talk to your Doctor or Therapist. They can point you in the right direction to find support.

Tina Barraclough is a stay at home mom and owner of

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her website for Business Opportunities, free e–books,Business Articles,etc.

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