

Expansion of Language at Home

Language is an important skill that allows a person to communicate. The development of language begins before we are able to use words. Language and literacy skills can be learned and built upon at any time. We can turn play and daily activities into an opportunity to build language skills, while keeping it fun and engaging for children!

The Current Situation

The current situation with Covid-19 has changed our daily lives so much. Overnight you have turned into your child's teacher, with all your other daily tasks still waiting for you. We are all missing our daily routines and activities that provide so many opportunities to immerse your child in language.

Whether it be the circle time at drop-in, a conversation with friends, or walking around the grocery store talking to your child about what they see. The simple interactions we once thought nothing about are suddenly not a part of our day to day lives anymore. While things continue to change, and we try to define our new "normal" it is important to keep language and literacy a part of your child's day. Have conversations, read books and sing songs. If you are able to, set up online video calls where your child can communicate with friends and family, and stay connected!



What Research Tells Us

The Hanen centre provides a research-based tips that show parents have the power to boost their children's language and literacy skills when they:

- Talk frequently with their child about thing of interest to the child
- Have conversations with their child that go back and forth a number of times
- Expose their child to print in a variety of ways, especially with books

Disclaimer

- We encourage you to keep your home language! It may feel at this time that your child is not being exposed to English, and you may be worried that won't be prepared for school. Things will eventually return to normal and your child will have time opportunity to learn English. Keeping your home language gives your child a strong sense of cultural and family identity.
- All children are at different stages of their language development. It is important to meet children where they are now. Hanen provides tips for parent's children who communicate without words, who have just started talking and who talk in sentences. For more information see the link:

<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Parent-Tips.aspx>

So much of what you already do in your day to day lives incorporates language and literacy, without you even realizing it!

Waking your child up with a song, or recognizing the letters on the cereal box before breakfast.

Take the time to make the most out of every day tasks and continue to find fun ways to engage your child in language.

Here are some simple ways to expand upon the tasks you are all ready doing:

- Go for a walk in your neighborhood. See what letters you can find around your community. Is your child able to identify any letters? Any words? Look for different signs, billboards, signs on trucks or posted in store windows. What sounds do you hear? Cars honking, sirens, or birds chirping? See if you child is able to make the sounds themselves.
- When making breakfast, read through the recipe with your child, talk about what you are making and see where they are able to help. Can they retrieve the ingredients for you, measure or stir? Notice the different letters and words on the ingredients. Is your child able to identify any of them?



- Become a broadcaster of your day. Talk through the tasks you are doing in different situations, exposing your child to a range of vocabulary. For example, the words you use while making dinner will be different then the words you use when running a bath. “I am getting the bowl for the cereal; I am pouring the cereal into the bowl.”

- If you cannot find time for anything else, the most important thing is to continue reading and singing to your child. Find a time that works for you. For some that might be right before bed or maybe it’s a great way to squeeze in some quiet time in the afternoon. A great way to incorporate songs is to sing about tasks that you are already doing, “This is the way we sweep the floors, sweep the floors, this is the way we sweep the floors, when they are dirty.”

Your days are already busy enough, try not to put pressure on yourself to add more to your plate.

The easiest thing you can do is incorporate language and literacy into tasks you are already doing on a daily basis, and make it fun!