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## **PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE AUDITORY AND LANGUAGE SKILLS**

### **TUNE IN, TALK AND TAKE TURNS..Dana Suskind, “Thirty Million Words”**

*The most critical time to develop a child’s language and intelligence is 0 to 36 months. The most powerful tool to develop your child’s brain is **VERBAL INTERACTION WITH AN ADULT**. It is imperative that you play with your child and talk about what they are doing. Use the activities they enjoy. Describe what they are doing and use a wide variety of vocabulary, inflection and emotion. Even if you do not understand what they are saying, engage in dialogue with them with your imagination. Read often with your child and ask them questions.*

These activities can be done consistently (and while having fun) to help improve your child’s acquisition of basic oral language skills, improve their auditory perception and development of phonemic awareness ( the ability to recognize the separate sounds that make up a word, skills that are essential for the development of reading and spelling skills), the ability to listen in background noise and the capacity to sustain listening attention. Following is a list of activities to do at home 20 minutes a day.

#### **Auditory Memory**

Practice the alphabet

Sing, sing and sing nursery rhymes!!!

Count forward and backwards

Have them repeat names of colors or shapes

What words do not go together (eg bread, milk, cereal, truck)

#### **Following Directions/Listening Skills**

Simon Says

Simon Game

Musical Chairs

Notice sounds in the environment and mimic them

Duck Duck Goose

Find items at grocery store

#### **Rhyming/Word Discrimination**

Read rhyming books (Bob Books)

Play music

Are sounds same or different?

Sing nursery rhymes

#### **Phonological Awareness**

Use pictures to illustrate minimal contrast pairs (tiger for /t/ and a dog for /d/)

What is the first sound you hear in “cat”? What is the last sound you hear in “frog”? Read aloud and have your child listen for target words and clap when they hear it

Read aloud and ask your child questions about what you have just read

Clap hands or tap pencil to identify breaks between syllables, words, and sentences

#### **Sequencing Activities**

How do you make a sandwich? How do you put on your clothes? What do we do to get ready for...bed, school, car ride?

Puzzles that show events in sequence (Talk about the puzzle as you do it together).

Cook together and review steps needed in the process.

# ASHA.org

## Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development

There are many ways you can help your child learn to understand and use words. See a speech-language pathologist if you have concerns.

### Birth to 2 Years

- Say sound like "ma," "da," and "ba." Try to get your baby to say them back to you.
- Look at your baby when he makes sounds. Talk back to him, and say what he says. Pretend to have a conversation.
- Respond when your baby laughs or makes faces. Make the same faces back to her.
- Teach your baby to do what you do, like clapping your hands and playing peek-a-boo.
- Talk to your baby as you give him a bath, feed him, and get him dressed. Talk about what you are doing and where you are going. Tell him who or what you will see.
- Point out colors and shapes.
- Count what you see.
- Use gestures, like waving and pointing.
- Talk about animal sounds. This helps your baby connect the sound and the animal. Use words like "The dog says woof-woof."
- Add on to what your baby says. When your baby says, "Mama," say, "Here is Mama. Mama loves you. Where is baby? Here is baby."
- Read to your child. You don't have to read every word, but talk about the pictures. Choose books that are sturdy and have large colorful pictures. Ask your child, "What's this?" and try to get him to point to or name objects.

### 2 to 4 Years

- Speak clearly to your child. Model good speech.
- Repeat what your child says to show that you understand. Add on to what she says. Use words like, "Want juice? I have juice. I have apple juice. Do you want apple juice?"
- It's okay to use baby talk sometimes. Be sure to use the adult word too. For example, "It is time for din-din. We will have dinner now."
- Cut out pictures of favorite or familiar things. Put them into categories, like things to ride on, things to eat, and things to play with. Make silly pictures by mixing and matching pictures. Glue a picture of a dog behind the wheel of a car. Talk about what is wrong with the picture and ways to "fix" it.

- Help your child understand and ask questions. Play the yes–no game. Ask questions such as, "Are you Marty?" and "Can a pig fly?" Have your child make up questions and try to fool you.
- Ask questions that include a choice. "Do you want an apple or an orange?" "Do you want to wear your red shirt or your blue shirt?"
- Help your child learn new words. Name body parts, and talk about what you do with them. "This is my nose. I can smell flowers, brownies, and soap."
- Sing simple songs, and say nursery rhymes. This helps your child learn the rhythm of speech.
- Place familiar objects in a box. Have your child take one out and tell you its name and how to use it. "This is my ball. I bounce it. I play with it."
- Show pictures of familiar people and places. Talk about who they are and what happened. Try making up new stories.

## 4 to 6 Years

- Pay attention when your child talks to you.
- Get your child's attention before you talk.
- Praise your child when she tells you something. Show that you understand her words.
- Pause after speaking. This gives your child a chance to respond.
- Keep helping your child learn new words. Say a new word, and tell him what it means, or use it in a way that helps him understand. For example, you can use the word "vehicle" instead of "car." You can say, "I think I will drive the vehicle to the store. I am too tired to walk."
- Talk about where things are, using words like "first," "middle," and "last" or "right" and "left." Talk about opposites like "up" and "down" or "on" and "off."
- Have your child guess what you describe. Say, "We use it to sweep the floor," and have her find the broom. Say, "It is cold, sweet, and good for dessert. I like strawberry" so she can guess "ice cream."
- Work on groups of items, or categories. Find the thing that does not belong in a group. For example, "A shoe does not go with an apple and an orange because you can't eat it. It is not round. It is not a fruit."
- Help your child follow two- and three-step directions. Use words like, "Go to your room, and bring me your book."
- Ask your child to give directions. Follow his directions as he tells you how to build a tower of blocks.
- Play games with your child such as "house." Let her be the parent, and you pretend to be the child. Talk about the different rooms and furniture in the house.
- Watch movies together on TV or a tablet. Talk about what your child is watching. Have her guess what might happen next. Talk about the characters. Are they happy or sad? Ask her to tell you what happened in the story. Act out a scene together, or make up a different ending.

- Use everyday tasks to learn language. For example, talk about the foods on the menu and their color, texture, and taste when in the kitchen. Talk about where to put things. Ask her to put the napkin on the table, in your lap, or under the spoon. Talk about who the napkin belongs to. Say, "It is my napkin." "It is Daddy's." "It is Tamara's."
- Go grocery shopping together. Talk about what you will buy, how many things you need, and what you will make. Talk about sizes, shapes, and weight.

# 5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return

from *Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND)*

Child-adult relationships that are responsive and attentive—with lots of back and forth interactions—build a strong foundation in a child’s brain for all future learning and development. This is called “serve and return,” and it takes two to play! Follow these 5 steps to practice serve and return with your child.



Serve and return interactions make everyday moments fun and become second nature with practice.

By taking small moments during the day to do serve and return, you build up the foundation for children’s lifelong learning, behavior, and health—and their skills for facing life’s challenges.

For more on serve and return:  
[tinyurl.com/serve-return](https://tinyurl.com/serve-return)

**Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND)** is a video coaching program that aims to strengthen positive interactions between caregivers and children. FIND was developed by Dr. Phil Fisher and colleagues in Eugene, Oregon.

For more about FIND:  
[tinyurl.com/find-program](https://tinyurl.com/find-program)

1

Notice the serve and share the child’s focus of attention.

Is the child looking or pointing at something? Making a sound or facial expression? Moving those little arms and legs? That’s a serve. The key is to pay attention to what the child is focused on. You can’t spend all your time doing this, so look for small opportunities throughout the day—like while you’re getting them dressed or waiting in line at the store.

**WHY?** By noticing serves, you’ll learn a lot about children’s abilities, interests, and needs. You’ll encourage them to explore and you’ll strengthen the bond between you.

2

Return the serve by supporting and encouraging.

You can offer children comfort with a hug and gentle words, help them, play with them, or acknowledge them. You can make a sound or facial expression—like saying, “I see!” or smiling and nodding to let a child know you’re noticing the same thing. Or you can pick up an object a child is pointing to and bring it closer.

**WHY?** Supporting and encouraging rewards a child’s interests and curiosity. Never getting a return can actually be stressful for a child. When you return a serve, children know that their thoughts and feelings are heard and understood.

# 5 Steps for Brain-Building Serve and Return

from *Filming Interactions  
to Nurture Development*  
(FIND)

Did you know that building a child's developing brain can be as simple as playing a game of peek-a-boo?



3

Give it  
a name!

When you return a serve by naming what a child is seeing, doing, or feeling, you make important language connections in their brain, even before the child can talk or understand your words. You can name anything—a person, a thing, an action, a feeling, or a combination. If a child points to their feet, you can also point to them and say, “Yes, those are your feet!”

**WHY?** When you name what children are focused on, you help them understand the world around them and know what to expect. Naming also gives children words to use and lets them know you care.



4

Take turns...and wait.  
Keep the interaction  
going back and forth.

Every time you return a serve, give the child a chance to respond. Taking turns can be quick (from the child to you and back again) or go on for many turns. Waiting is crucial. Children need time to form their responses, especially when they're learning so many things at once. Waiting helps keep the turns going.

**WHY?** Taking turns helps children learn self-control and how to get along with others. By waiting, you give children time to develop their own ideas and build their confidence and independence. Waiting also helps you understand their needs.



5

Practice  
endings and  
beginnings.

Children signal when they're done or ready to move on to a new activity. They might let go of a toy, pick up a new one, or turn to look at something else. Or they may walk away, start to fuss, or say, “All done!” When you share a child's focus, you'll notice when they're ready to end the activity and begin something new.

**WHY?** When you can find moments for children to take the lead, you support them in exploring their world—and make more serve and return interactions possible.

## 15 Read Aloud Tips for Babies and Toddlers

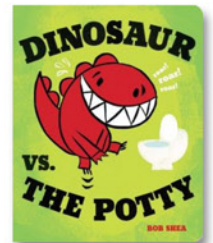
Research shows that reading aloud with children is the single most important thing you can do to prepare a child for reading and learning. Read Aloud 15 MINUTES National Campaign promotes parents reading aloud to their children at least 15 minutes every day starting at birth. First Book and Read Aloud 15 MINUTES have created a 15-title collection of books that are wonderful for reading aloud with very young children.

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Begin your child's journey of learning today!

**1**

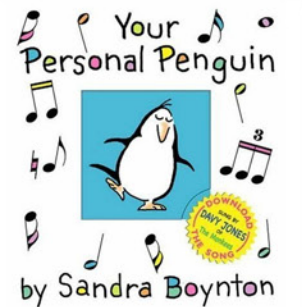
**Get excited! This is going to be fun! Enthusiasm is infectious, make sure your child catches it.**

“Dinosaur wins again!” - Dinosaur vs. The Potty by Bob Shea

**2**

**Read with expression. Go ahead! Use voices. Do sound effects. Make a fool of yourself... your child will love it.**

“I want to be your personal penguin. I want to walk right by your side.” - Your Personal Penguin by Sandra Boynton

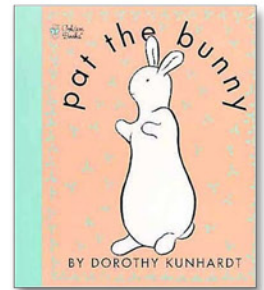
**3**

**Point to the pictures, and talk about them. Make them relatable: “Hey! That looks just like your toy train.”**

“Red caboose at the back. Orange tank car next...” - Freight Train by Donald Crews



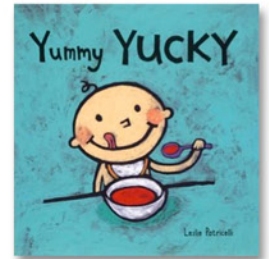
**4** Even a squirmy worm may be listening. Babies are grabby. Give them their own book to hold or something to gnaw on while you read.



“Judy can pat the bunny. Now YOU pat the bunny.” - Pat the Bunny by Dorothy Kunhardt

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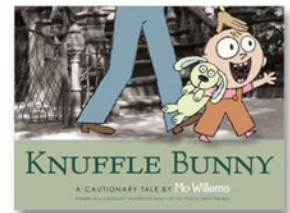
**5** Hungry baby? Multitask. It's OK - and sometimes advisable - to offer snacks, nurse, or bottlefeed while reading aloud.



“Spaghetti is YUMMY. Worms are YUCKY.” -Yummy Yucky by Leslie Patricelli

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**6** If Mr. or Ms. Grabby Pants thwarts your best efforts, then sing, do finger plays, recite Mother Goose... And try, try again (later).

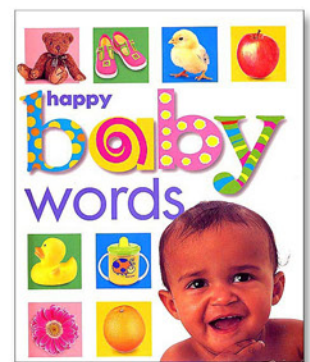


“Well, she had no choice. Trixie bawled. She went boneless. She did everything she could to show how unhappy she was.”

-Knuffle Bunny by Mo Willems

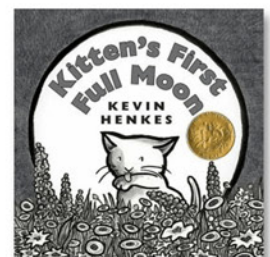
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**7** Let your child turn the pages, if he or she can. And over time, your child will learn which end of the book is up, that the letters are the things you are reading, that text flows from left to right...



**8** Awesome pictures. Find books that have them.

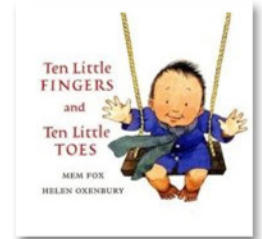
“It was kitten’s first full moon. When she saw it, she thought, There’s a little bowl of milk in the sky. And she wanted it.” -Kitten’s First Full Moon by Kevin Henkes





9

**Little ones love rhyming, word play and songs – provide a healthy diet of books that feature them, and see how babies gain language.**

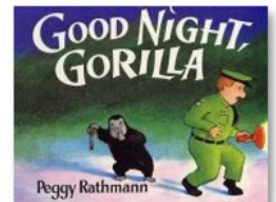


“And both of these babies, as everyone knows, had ten little fingers and ten little toes!” -Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes by Mem Fox

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10

**Short, simple board books are great for babies. In fact, some of the best books have hardly any words at all.**

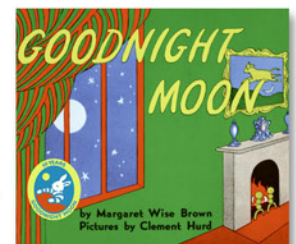


“Goodnight, Gorilla.” -Goodnight Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

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11

**Make reading aloud a habit when your baby is wee. Incorporate it into your daily routine, and it may soon become a treasured part of your day.**

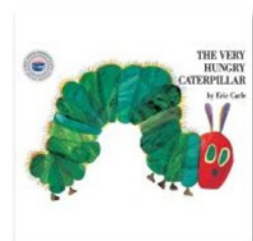


“Goodnight stars. Goodnight air. Goodnight noises everywhere.”  
-Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

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12

**Provide variety, but be prepared for repetition. A range of books with different authors and topics is fantastic – but don't be surprised when baby wants the same beloved book over and over... and over.**

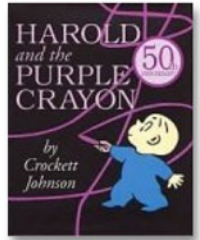


“Then he nibbled a hole in the cocoon, pushed his way out and... he was a beautiful butterfly!” -The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

13

**Books, books everywhere and lots of stuff to read. Nurture a reader: Make books an accessible part of your child's environment.**

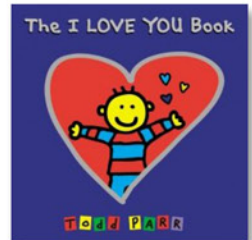
“He remembered where his bedroom window was, when there was a moon.” -Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson



14

**When reading aloud, find a comfortable spot where you won't doze off or be overly distracted.**

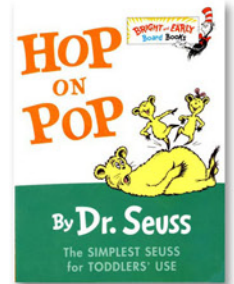
“I love you when you are silly.” -The I Love You Book by Todd Parr



15

**Practice makes perfect – for the listener and the reader. The more you do it, the easier it will be.**

“My father can read big words, too. Like CONSTANTINOPE and TIMBUKTU!” -Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss



Get these and other great books on the First Book Marketplace, an online resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need.



[www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org)



Read Aloud  
**15 MINUTES**

Every child. Every parent. Every day.

Find more tips and advice about reading aloud 15 minutes every day, from birth, at [ReadAloud.org](http://ReadAloud.org).