

Your 6 Year Old!

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments



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Your 6 year old – The story teller!

By 6 years of age, your child is telling lots of stories. His sentences are getting longer and are full of many new and different types of words. Your child is having conversations with other people about new experiences, his feelings, and what's around him. His listening skills are getting better, so he is able to understand more.

Everyday and everyway – How children learn language

Children learn language every single day and in almost everything they do! They learn new words, new sentences, and how to play with language. Any activity that you and your child do together is a chance to learn! To help your child develop good talking and listening skills, try the following tips in your own language...

The boy looks like he's mad at the cat. I can tell by his face. He looks angry because he has work to do and the cat won't leave.



Talking tips:

- Help your child make more complex sentences. **Add words** that connect your child's sentences together. For example, if your child says, "I'm tired. I want to go to bed", you say, "Ahh, you want to go to bed **because** you're tired."
- **Use different types of words** when you talk. Describe a new object (*a blender*) to your child by talking about what it does (*it mixes up food*), what it goes with (*food*), what group it belongs to (*kitchen things*), and where you find it (*in the kitchen*).
- When you tell stories to your child, use words like **first**, **next**, and **then**.



Listening tips:

- Use **order** (*first, second, third, last*), **position** (*between, beside*), and **time** words (*before, after*) when giving your child directions. **Show** your child what these words mean as you tell him these words.
- Get your child **ready to listen**. You might call his name. After giving the instruction, ask, "What do you need to do?" Encourage him to tell you what he needs to do.
- Talk about how things go together and how they are different. For example, when you are cleaning, you might say, "The vacuum and the broom are **the same** because I use both to clean. They are **different** because the vacuum cleans the rug and the broom cleans the floor. I plug in the vacuum, but I don't plug in the broom."



Activities to try...

Children learn by doing!



There are many activities that you can do with your child to help her learn language. You probably do some of these already! Use the **everyday and every way** tips when you try these activities:

- Ask your child to **tell you how to do something**. Let her be the teacher! Ask her to tell you how to play a game that you both know well, how to make a sandwich, or how to make a popsicle stick puppet. This will give your child practice using words like *first*, *next*, and *then*. It also gives her practice putting her ideas in order.
- **Tell stories together**. Ask your child to tell you what happened at school that day. Ask her to tell you what happened in a movie, TV show, or book. Tell your child about your experiences, using words to talk about the order in which things happen.

- Play **listening games** like *Simon Says*. Start with simple directions like “Simon says touch your nose”. Slowly make the directions harder by adding more steps (“Simon says touch your nose and your knees”), or by using words like **before** or **after** (“Simon says touch your nose before you touch your toes”, or “Close your eyes after you turn around.”)
- Use many different **feeling words** like *embarrassed*, *nervous*, and *excited*. Tell your child how you feel as you watch a movie together or read a book together. Ask her how she felt about it.

Children learn by reading!

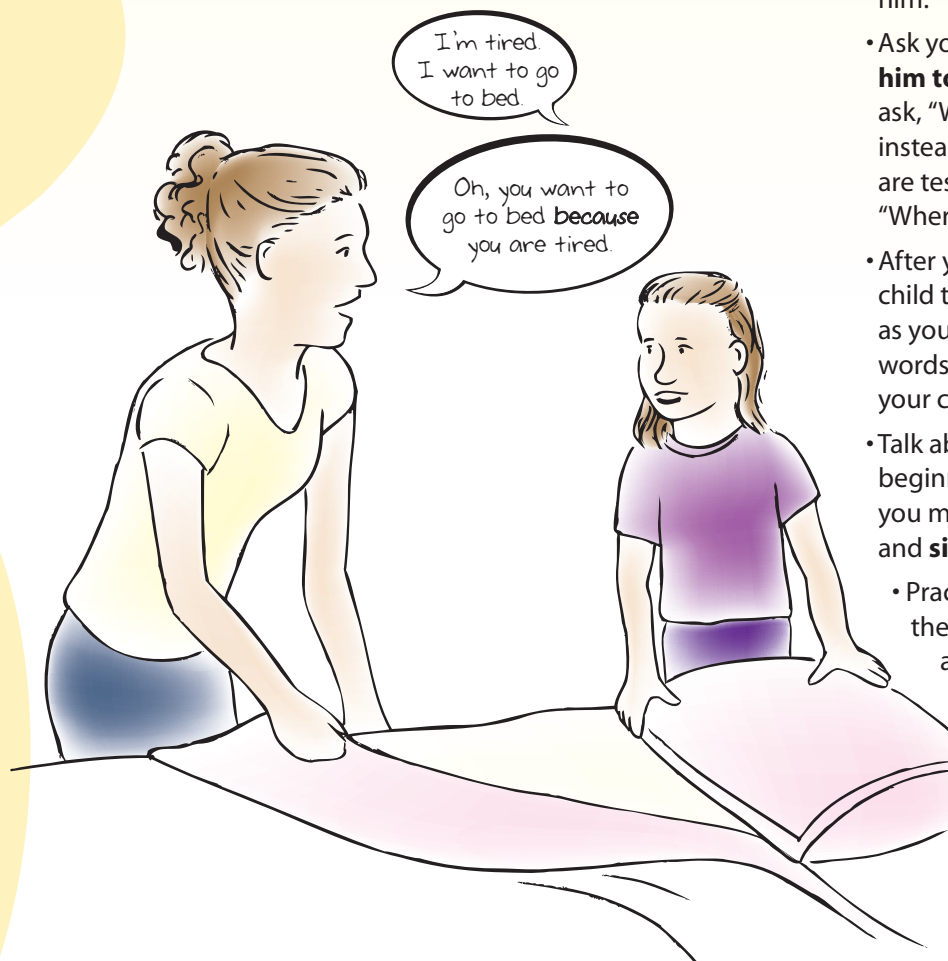


Reading and language go together. Reading can help your child learn to talk and listen.

Talking and listening help make reading and writing easier. All of these skills are important in school. Here are some tips to keep reading fun:

- **Continue to read out loud** to your child. Let your child choose books that interest him.
- Ask your child questions that **encourage him to talk about the story**. For example, ask, “What do you think will happen next?” instead of questions that sound like you are testing her, like “What is her name?” or “Where did it happen?”
- After you read a story together, ask your child to **retell the story in his own words** as you flip through the pictures. Add words like *and*, *then*, *so*, and *because* as your child tells the story.
- Talk about the sounds that you hear at the beginning and end of words. For example, you might say, “**T**oy starts with the sound **t** and **s**illy starts with the sound **sss**.”
- Practice playing with words by breaking them up into parts (*rain---bow*). Take away parts of the word and ask your child what’s left (“**rain-bow**. Take away **rain**. What’s left? **bow**.”)

Want more ideas for fun language games? Read the *Good Times With Games* newsletter.





What to expect in speech and language development

Children learn different words based on their own experiences and they communicate differently because of their personalities. Even though they develop speech and language at their own pace, they do learn the same things in a similar order.

Most 6 year olds:

Talking

- say most speech sounds correctly and are easy to understand
- speak in sentences that are 6 to 7 words long
- use words like *then*, *so*, and *but* in their sentences
- tell who was in a story, where the story took place, and what happened
- tell how to do simple things like making a peanut butter and jam sandwich
- tell you what you do with something (*you eat with a fork*)

Listening/Understanding

- listen for 15 to 20 minutes
- understand words like *right* and *left*, *first*, *second*, and *third*
- understand how everyday things go together (*a pig, horse, and cow go together because they are all animals.*)
- begin to enjoy riddles and jokes
- break long words into parts. For example, they might tell you that the word *snowman* has the word *man* in it
- know the sound that each letter makes (*s says sssssssss*)
- know the first sound and some of the last sounds in short words (*soup starts with s and ends with p*)

Social Skills

- know how their friends are feeling and tell you how they are feeling
- watch other people's facial expressions and body language to know what they are saying
- know how to start, maintain, and end a conversation
- begin to solve problems with some help from adults
- repeat what they have said if someone doesn't understand them

Some 6 year olds may still have trouble:

- saying the sounds *r* and *th*.
- using words like *himself*, *herself*, and *themselves*.
- using irregular past tense verbs, like *he ate*, *she fell*, and *they ran*.
- understanding time and place words like *before*, *after*, and *above*.



Want more information on speech and language? Read the Talk Box Resource List.

When to get help

You should be concerned if your 6 year old:

- has trouble saying speech sounds
- is hard to understand
- uses short sentences when talking
- makes mistakes in grammar
- pauses or hesitates a lot when she talks
- has trouble remembering what she has been told to do
- has trouble answering questions
- has trouble clearly telling you what happened in a story or at school
- has trouble with the rules of conversation, such as taking turns, staying on topic, or letting you know that she does not understand

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. To find one in your area...

- call your local health unit
- call Health Link Alberta :
 - Calgary area: 403-943-LINK (5465)
 - Edmonton area: 780-408-LINK (5465)
 - Toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- go to www.healthlinkalberta.ca



Go to www.parentlinkalberta.ca for more Talk Box ideas.

It is never too late to help your child with speech and language development.