

Your 7 Year Old!

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments



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Your 7 year old – “The Chatter Box”!

By 7 years of age, your child is really picking up speed when it comes to talking! She knows basic sentence structures and uses them to tell stories, tell about her day, tell about the things she sees, tell about what she knows...Some 7 year olds may not talk a lot because of their personalities – unless you pick a topic that they are really interested in, then watch out!

Everyday and everyway – How children learn language

Children learn language every single day and in almost everything they do! They learn new words, how to put sentences together to tell stories, 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...



Talking tips:

- When your child is telling you a story or what happened that day, **add words like then, so, and because**. This helps your child bring ideas together using these connecting words.
- Talk about what your child did each day. Help him include the important details and organize his thoughts by asking questions that use the **5Ws** (*who, what, where, when, why*) **and how**. For example, ask questions like “**What** did you do in art today? **How** did you make a paper mâché dinosaur? **Where** did you get the newspaper?”
 - **Talk about what you do** with different objects in

your home. Talk about what groups they belong to. For example, ask your child what he needs to sweep the floor (*a broom*) and **what group** it belongs to (*things that clean*).



Listening tips:

- After you tell your child to do something, **ask him to repeat back** what you said. This will help him remember what he hears and what he needs to do.
- When reading a story together, help your child **make a picture in his mind** of what is happening. Share what you **see** in your mind. Use lots of describing words, such as *big, beautiful, and colourful*. Making pictures in your mind helps you remember what you hear and read.
- Read books and watch TV together. **Ask your child to tell you what happened**. This gives your child practice at sitting, listening, and remembering what he just heard and saw.

What do you think the pinecone feels like?

I think it will feel rough and prickly.



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 everyway** tips when you try these activities:

- Play a game with **who, what, when, where,** and **why** questions. Before you read a book or tell a story, tell her you are going to play this game. When you're done, take turns asking questions about the book or story that start with these words. This will help your child understand what she hears and organize what she says.
- **Ask your child how something will feel** before she touches it. For example, ask how a coconut or a pinecone might feel. This is a great way to learn new words, like *rough, jagged, fluffy, woolly, and mushy*.
- **Take turns giving each other 2 or 3 directions to follow.** You can play this game in the kitchen, in the car, or just about anywhere! For example, when you are in the car, you could ask your child to look out the right window and name one thing she sees, look out the left window and name one thing she sees, and then clap her hands four times. This is even more fun when your child gives you directions to follow!

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:

- Make sure that your child is reading books that are **interesting to him** and that are **at his reading level**. If a book is too hard, your child may get frustrated and give up. If a book is too easy, it may not be enough of a challenge for your child. If your child has trouble reading or understanding more than 5 words on the first page, it's too hard for him. Ask your child's teacher or the librarian for a list of books that are right for your child.
- Have your child **re-read books that he loves** many times. This helps your child speak smoothly, understand new words, and use expression when he is reading out loud.
- **Talk to your child** about what was funny in a story, how the people in the story felt, and why things happened in the story. Ask your child what he thinks will happen next and why he thinks it will happen.

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 7 year olds:

Talking

- speak in sentences 7 to 8 words long and use connecting words, like *because, so, then, before, and after*
- use all pronouns correctly, including *himself, herself, and themselves*
- use irregular past tense verbs correctly, like *ate, fell, and ran*
- tell complete stories that have many details
- use specific vocabulary that they have learned at school
- tell you what you do with an object (*you eat an apple*) and what group it belongs to (*an apple is a type of fruit*)

Listening/Understanding

- listen to the teacher's instructions when sitting at their desk
- are beginning to understand simple metaphors and similes, such as *soft as a pillow*
- know they sometimes have trouble remembering things, but are not sure how to make remembering easier
- learn new words by listening to books being read aloud, by talking about these new words with an adult, and by using them in everyday activities
- tell you how things are different and how they are the same
- tell you the middle sound in a short word (*cat has the a sound in the middle*)
- tell you the sounds in a short word (*dog has these sounds: d---o---g*)
- play with words by taking away one sound (*If I take away the d in dog, it says og.*)

Social Skills

- are learning how to work with a partner
- are learning that respect and personal space (*not standing too close*) are important
- know how to start, maintain, and end a conversation
- know how to be a good friend

Remember, 7 year olds still make some mistakes. It's alright if they have trouble:

- saying the *th* sound (*thin, that, mother, math*).
- saying longer words, like *aluminum* and *cinnamon*.
- using words like *some* and *much* correctly. For example, they may still say *some spaghetthis* or *much bricks*.



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



When to get help

You should be concerned if your 7 year old:

- has trouble saying speech sounds
- is hard to understand
- uses only 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.