

Your 10-12 Year Old!

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments



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Your 10-12 year old is talking about talking!

From the ages of 10 to 12 years, you will notice slight but important changes in the way your child is talking. He uses harder vocabulary that he learns at school, like *magnetism* or *democracy*. He asks questions about what he hears and puts what he hears into his own words. He tells the main things that happened, tells why something happened, and retells stories using the important points. In short, he sounds a lot like an adult!

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...



Talking tips:

- Ask your child **what happened** at school, at sports practice, or at a friend's house. Treat this like a story. Make sure that he includes all the important parts, by asking questions like *Who was there?*, *What happened?*, *Where were you?*, *When was this?*, and *How did you feel?*
- Ask your child **what he thinks about different topics**. It can be something as simple as "Do you like cheese pizza? Why or why not?" Ask something that's a bit harder, like "If you were invisible for one day, what would you do and why?"
- When you use a new word, **tie it to something you and your child have done before**. For example, "Remember when we were at the lake last summer and we saw those big, fluffy, white clouds in the sky? Those are called **cumulous** clouds."



Listening tips:

- When you give your child directions, **use key words** to help him remember what he needs to do. For example, "You have **three** jobs to do after school. **First**, put your backpack away, **second** do your homework, and **third** set the table for dinner."
- **Show your child what to do when you don't hear part of his message**. Tell him why you missed what he said. "I couldn't hear you over the radio." Tell him the part that you did hear. "You said that you went somewhere yesterday?" Ask him to repeat what you missed. Ask your child to use these same steps when he misses part of what was said.
- **Talk about how people feel**, based on what their faces look like. Use many different feeling words like *cold*, *blue*, *bitter*, and *sweet*. Explain what these words mean.



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:

- Play **If I Gave You Three Things**. Take turns naming three objects, such as *a piece of chalk, a box of vitamins, and a tumbler*. Each person has to say which object they would return and what they would do with the other two things. This helps your child to learn how to explain the choices she makes. To make it trickier, name something that your child doesn't know. She will have to ask what it is first. This will also help her to learn new words!
- Play **I'll Give You a Point**. Ask your child to find a new word in a TV show or commercial. Ask her to write it down. You may have to help with the spelling! After the show is over, talk about what the word means. Look it up in the dictionary.

Ask her to use the new word in a sentence during the next half hour.

Give a point for each sentence she makes up!

...and **then** the dragon leapt into the sky when all of a sudden...

when all of a sudden there was a flash of light right behind the dragon!

- When you are driving in the car or waiting for the bus, start to **tell a story**. Say one part of a sentence at a time. Ask your child to finish your sentence and start the next one. Keep adding to each other's sentences, trying to keep the same people and thoughts, until you have a whole story. This game will help both of you practice good listening, memory, story telling, vocabulary – the list goes on! **WARNING:** This can become very silly!

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:

- Ask your child to **read to her younger brothers and sisters**. Older children like to show off what they know to other people in their family.
- Ask your child to read things like menus, signs, labels on food items, movie signs, billboards, and cartoons in the newspaper. Take **everyday opportunities for reading** when you are out and about!
- After your child has finished reading a book, **ask her to tell you what happened in the book**. Ask her what she liked about the book and what she didn't like.
- **Talk about how the people in the story felt**. Talk about what they said and the words that were used to describe their feelings.

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 10-12 year olds:

Talking

- tell you what a word means by saying the group or category it belongs to (*an apple is a fruit, a truck is a vehicle*)
- use the connecting words *if, now, though, anyways, otherwise, anyway, therefore, and however*
- give their opinion
- use the words *really* and *probably* often
- tell and write stories in an order that makes sense

Listening/Understanding

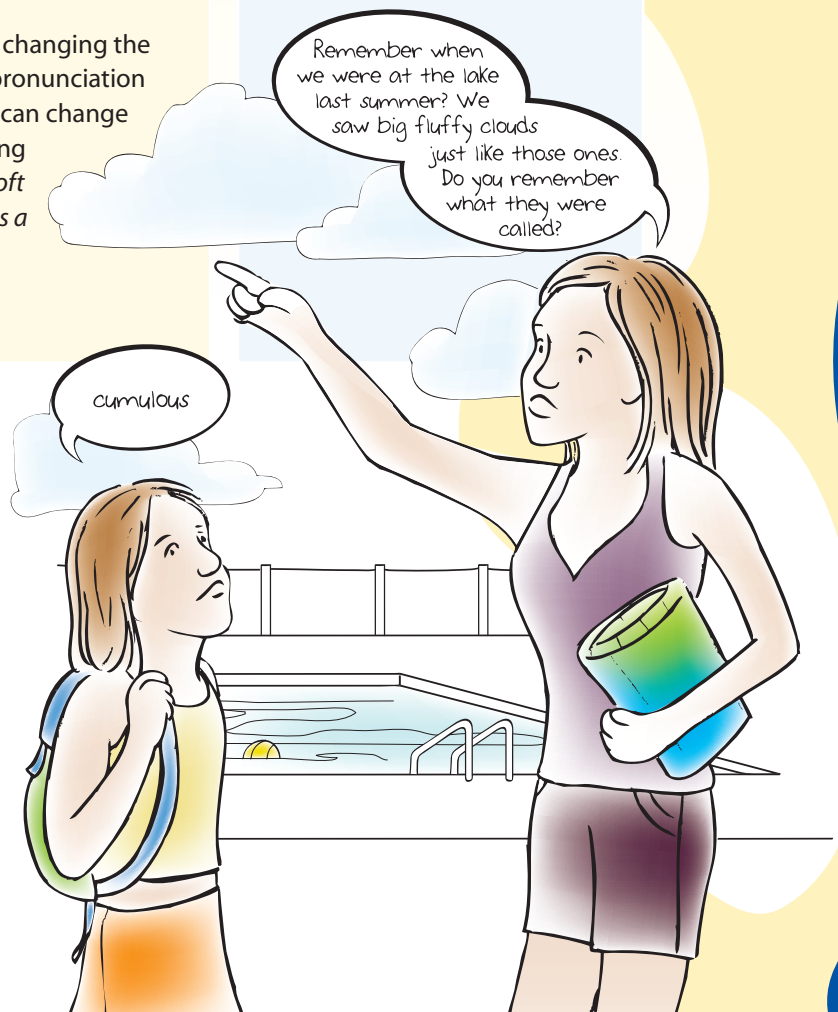
- use key words (*the three main ideas are...*) and connecting words (*if, however*) to help them understand
- remember information using strategies, such as picturing the information in their minds, breaking information into smaller chunks, and repeating the information
- understand words that describe personalities, such as *cold, bitter, blue, or sweet*
- use what they already know to help them understand what they are learning
- learn that changing the stress or pronunciation of a word can change it's meaning (*This is a soft ball. This is a softball.*)

Social Skills

- change how they talk depending on where they are and who they are talking to, such as talking to a teacher at school, talking to you at home, or talking to friends
- know how people are feeling from what they hear and what they see
- know when they weren't understood and know how to fix it

10-12 year olds are not done learning language! As they get older, they are still learning:

- new words.
- longer and harder sentences.
- ways to play with words and language.
- how to use what they hear and say to change their world.



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



When to get help

You should be concerned if your 10 to 12 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 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...

- contact your local health unit
- call Health Link Alberta at:
 - 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.