

Talking During Dressing

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What's special about dressing time?

The time you spend helping your child get dressed can easily become a language lesson. One-on-one attention is built into this situation. Dialogue is a natural part of it. You can talk about the here-and-now during dressing. ("Let's get your shirt over your head.") You can also talk about future events. ("We're going to the zoo today.")

Dressing is a series of actions that happen at least once a day, at about the same time and in a predictable order. The repetition involved in this experience is a great aid to language learning. Your child can expect certain language to be used over and over again within this familiar routine. This consistency of experience makes it easier for your child to learn new language.

Language forms such as plurals ("one foot, two feet") and prepositions ("socks on, shoes on") can be learned through daily discussion. Your child can also learn to communicate needs and wants. Then, the ability to express choices and opinions develops ("I want the blue shirt, not the red one").

Your child is also learning how to choose clothing based on weather (long pants versus shorts) and social events (play clothes versus dress-up clothes). Talking about how to make these decisions improves thinking skills.

Dressing Time Concepts

Language is based on ideas and experiences. Through interaction with the world, children learn meaning. Here are some concepts that are a natural part of the dressing routine. You can help your child learn these words and concepts by using them during dressing:

Nouns:

Shirt, socks, shoes, pants, dress, pajamas, etc.
Undershirt, underpants, diaper, slip, belt, button, zipper, sleeve, collar, etc.
Hat, raincoat, umbrella, boots, sunsuit, bathing suit, sunglasses, etc.

Major body parts:

Arm, leg, hand, foot, tummy, private parts, eye, ear, etc.

Less obvious body parts:

Fingers, cheeks, chin, elbow, wrist, heel, ankle, etc.

Actions:

Pull, push, put, raise, stand up, sit down, button, zip, snap, tie, hurry up, etc.

Prepositions:

On, off, in, out, through, around, over, etc.

Time/Sequence:

First, next, last, before, after, now, later, today, morning, afternoon, etc.

Adjectives:

Colors, dirty/clean, new/old, same/different, pretty/ugly, light/dark, hot/cold, warm/cool, long/short, right/left, striped, checked, plaid, print, etc.

Categories:

Things to wear on your feet, hands, head.

Things that keep you warm or cool.

Things with buttons, zippers, snaps, Velcro.

Number:

One, two, three, etc., a pair, every, each, same size, etc.

Sample statements to use during dressing

Dressing concepts can be combined in unlimited ways. Here are some examples of statements that are tailored to children in: 1) the early stages, and 2) the later stages of language development. Use statements and questions like these to encourage language development during dressing.

Purpose	Examples	Concepts
Naming	(1) "That's a shirt." (2) "There are your sneakers."	Nouns
Describing	(1) "Pretty dress." (2) "You look great in your new blue running suit."	Adjectives
Explaining	(1) "Oops, not this shirt. It's too small." (2) "You'll need a sweater for later. It's going to cool off this evening."	Adjectives Time/ Sequence
Comparing	(1) "Look! One red sock and one blue sock."	Adjectives

	(2) "This shirt has more buttons than the other one."	Numbers
Requesting	(1) "Get me a diaper, please." (2) "Where did you put your umbrella?"	Nouns
Giving Directions	(1) "Put your arms up." (2) "Get your pants over your feet. Then stand up and pull them up."	Actions/ Body Parts Actions/ Prepositions
Pretending	(1) "Wear this hat. Be a cowboy!" (2) "Why don't you put on your magician's cape and do some magic tricks?"	Nouns
Expressing Opinion	(1) "Sandals today or sneakers?" (2) "Which do you like better, the striped skirt or the plaid one?"	Nouns Adjectives

Use statements like these, and create your own, to practice language skills during dressing. You will find that dressing time can be a rewarding language experience for your child.

Vocabulary

Concept—A general idea or characteristic applicable to several objects or events, which helps to organize knowledge about the world.

Model—To provide an example of good speech or other behavior; to demonstrate a desired verbal response.

Speech and language clinician—A person who is qualified to diagnose and treat speech, language, and voice disorders.

Refer to:

- 2.1 Language Development
- 3.5 Pairing Movement With Learning
- 4.2 Learning Action Words
- 4.4 Help Your Child Learn Comparison Skills
- 5.1 Tips for Parents on Learning at Home
- 5.2 Talking During Mealtime
- 5.3 Talking During Bathtime
- 5.5 Talking and Television



Talking Tips for Parents

Use these suggestions during everyday activities to encourage your child's language development:

1. Keep talking fun.
2. Reward and praise your child's communication attempts. It's not necessary to correct your child's grammar or pronunciation.
3. Use facial expressions and gestures to help your child understand.
4. Keep your sentences short and simple.
5. Speak slowly and clearly. Repeat for your child if necessary.
6. Emphasize key words you want your child to learn.
7. Repeat main ideas frequently, in as many different ways as possible.
8. Set a good example for your child. **Model** correct speech. It's not necessary to ask your child to repeat exactly what you say.
9. Give your child enough time to respond. Your child may take a long time to put thoughts and feelings into words. Avoid the tendency to interrupt your child.
10. Discuss your child's language abilities with your **speech and language clinician**. Try not to expect too much—or too little—of your child.
11. Avoid placing too much pressure on your child to talk. Your child may not want to "perform" verbally in front of others.