



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What is a Language Delay

When a child's language is developing slower than expected for their age, but following the same general pathway of development, the child is said to have a language delay. For example, a child may be 4-years of age but understanding and/or using language typical of a 2-year old. This is referred to as a language delay.

Receptive Language Delay

A receptive language delay occurs when the child's understanding of language is below age expected level. Receptive language can include understanding of directions, listening to instructions, processing information, and vocabulary.

Activities to Target Receptive Language Skills (from www.nspt4kids.com)

Read Books: Encourage your child to find and point to pictures on the pages. Draw their attention to pictures by labeling and pointing to them to help expand their vocabulary. Re-state important parts of the story and ask questions to support story comprehension.

"I Spy": Label and point to pictures on the pages of an "I Spy" book. Make it a game and see who can find the most objects on the page! Make it more challenging by assigning specific items to you and your child that incorporate basic concepts (e.g., "You find a small key and I'll find a big one!"). You can also play "I Spy" without the book and find objects around the house or in your community.

Simon Says: This game is a great way to target following directions. It encourages your child to listen for 'Simon says' and then follow the direction. You can tailor the direction to the skill level of your child, and increase the difficulty as the game progresses. You can start with a basic direction such as 'raise your hands' and end up with one like 'count to five, touch your knees, and say your name'.

Twister: This game targets following directions and learning basic concepts. Basic concepts included in the game are right and left, colors, and body parts. If this is too challenging for your child, you can make it simpler by focusing on a certain aspect. You can hop to different colors or place a body part on a certain color.

Puzzle: You can turn putting a puzzle together into a time for targeting receptive language. Have your child find specific pieces and answer questions about them (e.g., "Find the car!", "What does a car say?"). Label all of the pieces to help increase your child's vocabulary. You can also come up with other pieces that might belong in the puzzle. For example, if the puzzle is all about zoo animals, think of additional zoo animals that were not included in the puzzle.

Go Grocery Shopping: In your own kitchen, that is! Create a shopping list, including pictures if needed, and have your child go shopping. Give directions such as 'The cereal is in the cupboard' or ask questions such as 'Where do we keep the milk?' You can expand the activity by having your shopping list include items to make cookies, and then follow directions while baking together.

Play: Engage in play with your child and their toys. You can target verbs, such as running, jumping, or sleeping. Work on basic concepts like in, on, and off. Follow your child's lead while being an accurate model for language.

Expressive Language Delay

An expressive language delay occurs when the child's use of language is below what is expected for their age. Expressive language can include using words effectively to communicate, vocabulary, clarifying intent, using appropriate grammar and sentence structure.

Activities to target Expressive Language Skills (from www.nspt4kids.com)

Books: Books are a great way to help develop expressive language in children. The important thing to remember when reading books with your child is to ask open-ended questions. For example, "what is she doing?" "How is he feeling?" "What's happening in this picture?". These are open ended questions versus yes or no questions or questions with one-word answers.

Wordless books: Wordless books are great for younger children who are working on developing expressive language skills. With younger children, you can ask them direct questions like, "What is this?" or "What color is this?". You can expand upon your child's answers by saying things like, "You're right; that's a cat. He's a black cat". This will help model language and provide good input as well as working on output.

Pretend play: Pretend play can target higher level expressive language skills. When pretending or building a scenario, your child is working on storytelling and sequencing activities. Always ask your child open ended questions when engaging in pretend play. This allows them to create the scenario and path as opposed to limiting their language with a single word answer. Some examples of questions are, "What should happen next?" or "Where should we go? Who should come with us?".

Cooking: Cooking is a great way to target expressive language through sequencing. Have your child narrate the steps of your recipe. This can be done by having her look over all the ingredients (either by reading words or by naming what she sees in front of her). Then, you can ask them to monitor and narrate what you have done, what you are doing, and what you still need to do.

Playdough: Playdough can be used to build scenery, animals, food or any number of creations. Allow your child to express what she wants to create or what she wants you to build. Cookie cutters or other molds can help aid children if they are having trouble utilizing their imagination to build with playdough. This is a great opportunity to have your child request more or different playdough by using an, "I want..." Or an "I need..." phrase.

Toy animals: Toy animals can be used similarly to pretend play. Again, be sure to ask open ended questions. This is also another opportunity to have your child utilize "I want..." or "I need..." phrases. Ask your child to narrate or express what the animals are/should be doing.

Train sets/cars: Cars and trains can be used in a similar manner that toy animals would be used. Cars or trains sometimes come with tracks or ramps. If you don't have ramps, you can improvise by using a table or another piece of furniture. You can utilize these tracks or ramps to have your child verbalize "go again" or "go up/down" or "ready...set...go".

Dress up: Dress up can be incorporated into pretend play or an entire activity in itself. You can have your child express what they want to wear or what they want you to wear. Ask them open ended or imaginative questions such as, "where should we go now that we're all dressed up?" or "who are we?".

Play food: Your child can pretend they are cooking and/or serving you food. Have them ask you what you'd like to eat, or express to you what they are cooking, how they are cooking it, and who they are serving. You can also use a puppet with pretend food with the younger children. Have the children feed the puppet and tell it, "Eat banana" or "eat the apple puppet". You can engage them by pretending to either enjoy or dislike the food in an exaggerated manner. Have them say whether they thought the puppet enjoyed the food or did not like it.

Bubbles: Bubbles are a great tool to use with younger children. Blow bubbles and then pause. Ask your children to say, "More bubbles!" or "My turn." if they are old enough to blow the bubbles themselves.

Additional Resources

Books to Target Language Learning

- Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See & others by Eric Carle
- The Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- If you give a Mouse a Cookie & others by Laura Numeroff

Books to Teach Figurative Language

- My Mouth is a Volcano by Julia Cook
- The Bad Seed by Jory John
- The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

Books for Making Inferences and Predictions

- The Big Hungry Bear by Don & Audrey Wood
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson & Axel Sheffler
- No David by David Shannon

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

