

Language Development Activities

Rolling the Ball



Sit or stand opposite your child and take turns rolling a ball back and forth. You can also take turns rolling the ball down a ramp (use an empty box or sofa cushions to create one) or through a tunnel (made from an empty box or under a chair).

Strategies:

- Name the toys and actions while playing. Hold the ball near your face as you name it.
- Pause before you roll the ball. Wait expectantly for 10-15 seconds, giving your child time to look at you or vocalize (they might say "go" or make a sound) to indicate they want you to roll the ball.
- Comment on what is happening: For example, say "You pushed the ball," "kick," or "roll," etc.
- Follow their lead during play. If you want to sit and roll the ball but they prefer to kick it around the room, join in with what they're doing. This approach will likely keep them engaged in the game for longer.
- Copy what they say and add another word: If they say "ball," you can say "roll the ball" or "kick the ball."
- Offer choices while playing: For instance, ask, "Should we use the ramp or the tunnel?"



Block Tower

Sit opposite your child and encourage them to take turns adding a block to a tower. Each time you add a block, say "on," "up," or "more blocks." You could also build a wall and take turns rolling cars or balls into it to knock it down.

Strategies:

- Pause: Before you add a block to the tower, pause and wait expectantly for 10-15 seconds. This allows your child time to look at you or vocalize (they may say "on" or make a sound) to indicate they want you to add a block.
- Encourage Participation: If your child wants to push the tower down, say, "ready...steady...push!" but pause before saying "push" to give your child an opportunity to say it or vocalize.
- Comment on Actions: Describe what is happening by saying, "You pushed the tower down," or "It's a big tower, lots of blocks." If your child uses fewer words, keep your comments simple, like "block" or "on."
- Follow Their Lead: If your child is more interested in knocking the tower down, turn this into a game. Build the tower and cheer when they knock it down. They will likely ask you to continue, keeping them engaged in the activity.
- Expand Language: Repeat what your child says and add another word. For example, if they say "on," you can say, "put block on" or "put on."
- Communication Temptations: Store the blocks in a clear container with a lid. Your child may need your help opening the container, so encourage them to make a request using pointing, vocalizing, or gestures.



Reading with Your Child

- Name the Pictures: Name them as your child looks at the pictures in the book. Encourage your child to point at the pictures, too.
- Comment While Reading: While reading the book and looking at the pictures, comment on what you see. For example, if your child points at a dog, you could say, "little doggie" or "happy doggy." As you turn the page, say "turn" or "turn the page." When your child brings you a book, you can say "book" or "open."
- Offer Choices: Let your child choose between two books.
- Repeat Key Words: Say the keywords or names of the pictures repeatedly. If your child remains engaged, read the story again, making sure to repeat the keywords and phrases.
- Expand Language: If your child attempts to name something from the book, repeat what they say and add another word to help them learn to build longer sentences. For example, if your child says "dog," you could say, "The dog is sleeping."
- Pause for Participation: If your child is familiar with the story, pause at exciting or predictable parts to see if they can fill in the gap. If they don't respond, continue reading as usual.

Social stories are valuable tools for children with autism as they help them understand social situations and expectations, develop social skills, improve behavior and emotional regulation, enhance understanding of social interactions, and assist with sequencing tasks.

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