



Handouts for  
PARENTS of  
Late Talkers

By: [SpeechyThings](#)



# Verbal Routines

are repetitive phrases or sentences you can say with your child. Your responsibility is to build the routine and use it with the child daily. Eventually, you will pause at key words to allow your child to fill in the blanks.

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- You will know your child is familiar with the routine when they give you eye contact or an expectant look or smile when you pause.
  - Give your child *plenty* of time (5 to 10 seconds) to fill in the word.
  - If they don't fill in the word after 5 to 10 seconds, continue with the verbal routine.
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**Book Example:** Choose a book that is engaging and repetitive. In the following example- our key word is "duck".

"I see a yellow (pause) DUCK looking at me."

**Functional Example:** You have many routines you do with your child every day- brushing teeth, changing diapers, and more. Start talking through them.

"Let's wash our (pause) hands! Turn on the (pause) water. Get the (pause) soap. Wash wash wash! Dry them with a (pause) towel."

**Song Example:** Choose a repetitive, kid-friendly song and sing it slow. Choose a few "key words" for this sing.

"Old MacDonald had a farm, ee-i-ee-i (pause) OH!"

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**Why:** By building a routine, you have lessened the work your child's brain has to do to speak. They don't have to think of *what* to say because they know what comes next.



# How to Choose Target Words

As adults, we take for granted how difficult speech truly is. To say a simple word our lips, jaw, tongue, lungs, and vocal cords all have to move in perfect timing. We take this coordination for granted.

Kids are more likely to attempt to imitate words when we keep the following considerations in mind...

1. **Speech Sounds:** What sounds are involved? Some of the earliest developing sounds include p, b, m, t, d, n, and vowels.
2. **Number of syllables:** One syllable words are easier than two syllable words. Furthermore, two syllables that repeat (i.e. dada, mama, nana) are easier than syllables that change (i.e. cookie, money)
3. **Motivation:** If a word is motivating for a child, they are more likely to attempt it. We need to focus on their favorite nouns first (i.e. puppy, cookie, mama, dada, ball, bubble).
4. **Simplify:** If a word doesn't follow the above guidelines, or if it has two or more consonants in a row (i.e. granny, strawberry), make it easier for your child to repeat. Examples: bubble/buhboh, car/tar, monkey/muh-kee, strawberry/tawberry

**\*\*Be sure to support any attempt your child makes to imitate or communicate.\*\***



# Sabotage... Out of Love

What: Place their favorite toys in sight but out of reach.

Why: We are creating opportunities where they need to communicate with you. When they begin to reach or grunt to ask for their toy, do the following:

- Hold the toy close to your face and name it.
- Pause for 5 seconds to give your child an opportunity to imitate.
- If they don't imitate- it's okay! Name it one or two more times and then hand it to them.
- If they do imitate- YAY! Hand it to them.

Why: Our purpose here is teaching that words get us cool stuff. The purpose for holding the toy close to your face is to facilitate the interpersonal nature of communication via eye contact. It also encourages them to watch your mouth while you speak- this activates their motor mirror neuron and helps lay the pathway in their brain to eventually perform the same movement with their own mouth.

**\*\*Be sure to wait longer than you think you need to- it will feel unnatural to you but it will help them.\*\***



# How To Model Words

What: To set a good language and speech example for your child, keep these things in mind:

- Talk to them often, but make it simple. Fewer words will be easier for them to process. For example, if we hear a train blow:

- We don't want: "Oh wow! I hear the train too! Chugga chugga chugga chugga choo choo. It's loud! Oh it's getting closer! I wonder where it's going. Maybe it's carrying bricks and milk. Maybe it has animals! Do you remember seeing Thomas the train? He says 'I think I can I think I can!'."

- We do want: "Tain! Ooooh train! Loud train. Choo choo train! I hear a train!"

- You want to say your target word 5 times in a given context. The above example demonstrates this with the word "train".

- When you want them to imitate, only say one word at a time.

Why: We are giving your kiddo plenty of time and opportunities to process the language they are hearing. Remember, your brain is efficient at processing and producing language but they are still learning! Speak slower than you think you need to.



# Make Noises

What: Say lots and lots of “environmental noises”- This means using a wide variety of onomatopoeias, animal noises, and transportation noises. Say them every chance you get throughout the day. It could be during play, during snack time, or when you see a really cool truck drive by.

## Examples:

- Animals: moo, meow, wuff, baabaa, peepeep, etc
- Transportation: vroom, choochoo, beepbeep, etc
- Other: uh oh, owie, yum, oh no, whoopsie, yay

It is even better if you can build them into a routine. For example, each time either you or your child takes a bite of food, say “yummm!” expressively. Each time you finish singing a song you can say “yay!” and clap your hands. Have *fun* with this!

Why: Kids tend to imitate these “non-word words” more easily so we can use them to teach imitation. They are silly and attention-grabbing!



# Why Manners Don't Matter (yet)

"Please" and "thank you" will be very important words for your child to learn in the future. When your child is first learning language, however, it is important to focus on language that is more functional and meaningful to them. We are far better off learning to ask for an item by naming it rather than just pointing and saying "please".

Furthermore, "more" is a very popular first word. It is useful for requesting "more" of an item, but we want to quickly pair it with the name of the item they are requesting more of.

In both cases- encourage use of nouns as opposed to pleasantries and "more" can be the difference between your child having a vocabulary of 40 words and a vocabulary of one (very polite) word.



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-Lindsey-

