Dear Parents,

It’s hard to believe the end of the school year is here already! As I’ve been thinking about summer packets, I’ve decided to do things a little bit differently from past years. So much of language development is based on the desire to connect and communicate during shared activities and experiences. Sometimes the most important thing you, as parents, can do to encourage your child’s communication growth in the summer is to just get outdoors, explore, talk, and *PLAY!* 😊

The internet is a WEALTH of knowledge and can be addictive to search, but I also know it can be quite overwhelming. I’ve pulled together some ideas and activities from different online resources and have done my best to site the source in case you want to visit it for more ideas and tips. I hope you find the information below useful, but remember these are just suggestions. You know your child best, so choose activities according to their age, development, and interests. Above all else, just have fun! Children often respond best when we act our silliest.

**LISTENING SKILLS AND FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS**

Taken from [www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com) (This is a great resource for parents, especially the Handy Handouts section. It offers informational handouts on just about every aspect of communication which are written in a parent-friendly manner.)

**Different Ways of Following Directions**

By Kevin Stuckey, M.Ed., CCC-SLP and Susie S. Loraine, M.A., CCC-SLP

*Verbal (spoken) directions* are a part of everyday life for adults and children. Appropriate behavior, social interaction, and academic success are all dependent on the ability to understand and follow verbal directions. Following verbal directions requires strong knowledge of basic concepts and the ability to process and retain auditory information.

*Basic concepts* are words that individuals need to comprehend to perform everyday tasks such as following directions, participating in classroom routines, and engaging in conversation. In fact, basic concepts are typically the foundation of verbal directions. Basic concepts may include, but are not limited to:

- **Basic colors** - red, blue, green, etc.
- **Directions** - through, around, etc.
- **Quantities** - few, many, etc.
- **Sequences** - first, next, last, etc.
- **Shapes** - round, square, etc.
- **Size** - big, little, etc.
- **Social/emotional states** - happy, sad, etc.
- **Characteristics** - old, new, etc.
- **Textures** - rough, smooth, etc.
- **Time** - late, early, etc.
- **Spatial relationships and positions** - front, behind, top, bottom, etc.
Whether in the classroom with teachers, at home with parents, or in the community with friends, children are asked to follow directions. They actively engage their brains when listening and following verbal directions. There are five different types of following directions. These include basic directions, sequential directions, quantitative and spatial directions, temporal directions, and conditional directions.

**Basic Directions**

Following basic directions starts with a simple, one-step direction using one element, such as “Point to the ball.” The difficulty increases as more elements are added to the verbal directions, such as color (Point to the red ball.), size (Point to the large ball.), action (Point to the ball that is spinning.), or location (Point to the ball that is below the car). Then, the higher levels combine these elements (Point to the small red ball that is spinning below the car.).

**Sequential Directions**

This skill targets the child’s ability to follow multi-step and sequential directions. Multi-step directions require following two or more directions at a time (Put the red block in the basket and close the door.). Sequential direction tasks involve following directions in a specific order (Put the glue in the box, push your chair under the table, and get in line.).

**Quantitative and Spatial Directions**

Some verbal directions involve the use of quantitative concepts and spatial relations. Terms to denote quantity include one, two, all, both, either, or, and, not, except, and don’t. Terms indicating spatial location include first, second, third, last, and between. Higher levels of this activity combine quantitative and spatial relations with descriptive elements such as size and color. For example, a higher-level direction may be: “Choose the toy that is between the small green rocket and the big yellow train.”

**Temporal Directions**

Temporal directions target a student’s ability to follow directions containing the words “before” or “after” in a variety of positions within the utterance. For example, in some instances, the term “before” is located in the middle of the direction: “Put the truck in the box before you put the robot in the box.” Another trial may position the term “before” at the beginning of the utterance: “Before you put the doll in the box, put the rocket in the box.” Higher levels of this activity increase auditory memory and processing demands by adding color attributes. For example: “After you put the green doll in the box, put the red plane in the box.”

**Conditional Directions**

This task provides directions with certain conditions. Students decide what actions to do based on the given condition(s). For example: “If a doll is in the box, put the box on the truck.” Some directions also involve negation: “If a rocket is not in the box, put the box on the truck.” Higher levels add elements such as color, quantity, and size to increase the auditory memory and processing demands: “If a green doll and a blue train are in the box, put the box on the large truck. If not, put the box on the small truck.”
There are many FUN ways that you can work on your child’s listening skills and I have five playful ways for you to do so! These can be used with preschoolers through school age….you just need to adjust the difficulty level to match your child’s ability level, and then slowly increase the difficulty level.

**Simon Says**

You know this age-old game, right? Someone is “Simon” and he tells everyone what to do by saying “Simon says….” However if he tells you what to do without saying “Simon says” prior to the directions but you do it anyway…you’re out!

This game is all about having to listen and follow directions. But for kids who might already struggle with this skill, there are a few recommendations I have to make this game fun and motivating for your child:

- Rather than “Simon says” I recommend you change it up to a more motivating character. Does your child love superheroes? Play “Spiderman Says!” Does your child love princesses? Play “Cinderella Says!” If it around the holidays, you can do “The Scarecrow Says,” “The Mummy Says,” “The Turkey Says,” “The Snowman Says,” “Santa Says” etc. Be creative! You could even have the person who is “it” dress up like the character! This will not only give your child the opportunity to listen and follow directions but this will also give him the opportunity to give directions to others!
- Only give directions your child can understand. Start simple. Jump. Turn around. Blink your eyes. Once he can follow simple one step directives, start to make them a little harder with two items of information like jump two times or turn around three times. You can then add three part directives like Jump three times then turn around. And so on. If your child is struggling, step back a step.
- When starting out you may want to give the directions and then show him what you want him to do. For example, tell him “Jump” and then physically jump. This will give him a visual. This is helpful as you start to increase the complexity of the directions.

**Red Light, Green Light**

Another classic game, this is a great game to work on following directions. Here are some tips for using this game to work on your child’s listening skills:

- Once your child gets the hang of the concepts of green-means-go and red-means-stop, add in another color “light” to the mix! They did this in a class my nephew took…I think it was Purple Light means you jump like a bunny! How fun is that!? Just some ideas off the top of my head: Yellow Light for crawling, Orange light for turning around, Blue light for clapping…you get the idea.
- A tip to help him understand the directions at first: Make signs with the colors you will use in the game with pictures of the motor movements on them. So if you did purple-is-hop-like-a-bunny you can make a round purple “light” and put a picture of a bunny on it as a visual reminder. Then slowly take the signs away and have your child play JUST by listening.
I Spy

This is like the gold-star car trip game! One person finds an object within view and begins to describe it one attribute at a time. “I spy something blue. I spy something with four wheels. I spy something that goes vroom vroom!” (Sidenote…apparently “vroom” is not a word. What a pity since my 21 month old uses it constantly) Anyway…the other players must listen to all the attributes and figure out what the item is. This game can even be done items not in view (like a backwards 20 Questions) but I would not recommend this with young children or any child that has difficulties with listening comprehension. Here are my tips for using I Spy with your child:

- Start SIMPLE. To teach the game, you may want to take three items and place them in front of you and your child to play the first few times, to help your child grasp the game and give him a smaller playing field, if you will. In fact you may need to play this way for a while depending on your child’s age and ability level. Eventually you can play in a small room, outside, in the car, etc.
- To help your little one stay organized and remember the information he is being given, write down each attribute after you say it (even when it is HIS turn, write it down also). Then go back and review the attributes each time with him (do the same when it is your turn to guess so he is continually hearing the attributes over and over).

Obstacle Courses

I’ve written about obstacle courses before. Children usually LOVE them and they combine gross motor learning with language learning (providing a multi-sensory learning experience). Though I have a ton of info on my obstacle course post (be sure to check it out) here are a few recommendations on using them to target listening skills:

- Again, start SIMPLE. Set up maybe only a 3-5 part course at first and then increase it as your child’s skills develop.
- To target listening, you can two things. First, you can give him directions on exactly how to go through the obstacle course. This works best if at least a couple different steps can be manipulated differently. For example, one step could be a small table. But does he go under, over, or around the table? He will have to listen to find out! You could set up a station with blocks and tell him he needs to build a 5 block tower. Maybe a step with a hoola hoop that he could either jump in or actually try to hoola. Make sense?
- Another way to incorporate listening is to have one step of the course be just that: following directions before he can go on. It can be like a “simon says” step where he has to follow whatever directions you give, and then he can keep going.

**On a side note, playgrounds are a WONDERFUL place to set up obstacles for following directions!**

**Recommended website:** I have just discovered, thanks to my wonderful co-worker Mrs. Ross, www.pbskids.org which has a wonderful selection of children’s games that are language rich and educational. A great one for following directions is called “Messy Attic.” It’s a bit tricky to locate so I will do my best to navigate your way. On the homepage click the “games” button. Scroll down to “popular topics” and click “all topics.” Once there, scroll down to “problem solving games” and you will find “Messy Attic.” ENJOY!!!
ASKING AND ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Taken from www.superduperinc.com

By Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.

It is absolutely essential that children understand and be able to ask and answer WH questions. These simple questions lay the groundwork for children to participate in conversations, demonstrate knowledge, and collect information about themselves and their world. When children are learning to process and answer WH questions, they usually follow a developmental and predictable sequence. “What” is the earliest question mastered, followed by “Who” and “Where.” Finally, an understanding of “When” and “Why” develop, with “Why” being the most difficult to master.

These simple questions may be difficult for some children to answer; however, there are strategies parents can use to help their children learn them. Hints or cues can help your child answer questions or respond appropriately to a situation. We can use visual cues to help children understand and formulate WH questions. These visual cues may include showing photographs, illustrations, or actual objects to prompt a correct response to a question. For example, show your child an illustration of a lady wearing a ring and ask, “What do you wear on your finger?” The child examines the illustration and answers the question. It may be necessary to tell your child the answer to the question and then ask the question again. Be sure to work on only one WH question type at a time. In other words, be sure your child understands “What” questions before beginning to teach “Who” questions.

Here are some other activities to help your child practice and master WH questions and answers.

• While reading simple storybooks with illustrations or pictures, ask your child questions like, “Who is this? What is he/she doing? Where is the child going? When will he/she come back? Why is he/she leaving?” Practice these types of questions, as well as saying “The girl went to the store. Where did you go today? She is tying her shoes. What do you do when you put on your shoes? She came home from the store after lunch. When did you get home from school today?”

• Make small books. Have your child illustrate a book with photos or drawings with a title like “Our Family Vacation.” Your child can answer each of the WH questions that you may dictate. For example, “Who went on vacation? Where did you go? When did you leave/return? What did you do on your vacation? Why did the family go on vacation?” Make books about the child’s birthday, holidays, family time, shopping trips, etc.

• Ask questions about your child’s day at school using WH questions. “Who did you sit with at lunch? Where did the class go for music time? When did you play outside? What did you eat for lunch? Why did you bring home your books?”

• Cut pictures from magazines/books. Make a WH chart with each type of WH question in a separate column. Show your child a picture and ask him/her to place the picture in the correct column. For example, you show the child a picture of a man - he/she puts the picture in the Who column. An apple – he/she places in the What column; a picture of a park – he/she places in the Where column.
• Improve your child’s reading comprehension by asking WH questions during and after story time. Interrupt stories and ask a series of questions related to the story topic. Ask your child to create questions about the story with Who, What, When, Where, or Why as the first word of his/her question. Children learn from these prompts and will begin using these comprehension strategies while reading on their own.

• Use picture cards made from clippings of magazines or old books. Show your child a card and say, “Ask me a question about this picture.” If you are showing your child “shoes,” he/she may ask, “What do you wear on your feet? Why did you get new shoes? When do you buy shoes? Where do you wear shoes? Who buys your shoes?”

Your child’s understanding and formulation of simple WH questions lays a foundation for developing skills in communicating, generalizing, and processing information in his/her environment. Parents have countless opportunities to give children practice in questioning and answering techniques, as well as provide visual cues for their children to help them acquire new language skills. The mastery of these simple questions is invaluable to the early learner.

**EXPANDING LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY**

This information has been adapted from [http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/parent-stim-activities.htm](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/parent-stim-activities.htm) (Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development)

**For ages 2 – 4**

- Use good speech that is clear and simple for your child to model.
- Repeat what your child says indicating that you understand. Build and expand on what was said. “Want juice? I have juice. I have apple juice. Do you want apple juice?”
- Make a scrapbook of favorite or familiar things by cutting out pictures. Group them into categories, such as things to ride on, things to eat, things for dessert, fruits, things to play with. Create silly pictures by mixing and matching pictures. Glue a picture of a dog behind the wheel of a car. Talk about what is wrong with the picture and ways to "fix" it. Count items pictured in the book.
- Help your child understand and ask questions. Play the yes-no game. Ask questions such as "Are you a boy?" "Are you Marty?" "Can a pig fly?" Encourage your child to make up questions and try to fool you.
- Ask questions that require a choice. "Do you want an apple or an orange?" "Do you want to wear your red or blue shirt?"
- Expand vocabulary. Name body parts, and identify what you do with them. "This is my nose. I can smell flowers, brownies, popcorn, and soap."
- Sing simple songs and recite nursery rhymes to show the rhythm and pattern of speech.
- Place familiar objects in a container. Have your child remove the object and tell you what it is called and how to use it. "This is my ball. I bounce it. I play with it."
- Use photographs of familiar people and places, and retell what happened or make up a new story.
For ages 4 – 6

- When your child starts a conversation, give your full attention whenever possible.
- Make sure that you have your child’s attention before you speak.
- Acknowledge, encourage, and praise all attempts to speak. Show that you understand the word or phrase by fulfilling the request, if appropriate.
- Pause after speaking. This gives your child a chance to continue the conversation.
- Continue to build vocabulary. Introduce a new word and offer its definition, or use it in a context that is easily understood. This may be done in an exaggerated, humorous manner. "I think I will drive the vehicle to the store. I am too tired to walk."
- Talk about spatial relationships (first, middle, and last; right and left) and opposites (up and down; on and off).
- Offer a description or clues, and have your child identify what you are describing: "We use it to sweep the floor" (a broom). "It is cold, sweet, and good for dessert. I like strawberry" (ice cream).
- Work on forming and explaining categories. Identify the thing that does not belong in a group of similar objects: "A shoe does not belong with an apple and an orange because you can’t eat it; it is not round; it is not a fruit."
- Help your child follow two- and three-step directions: "Go to your room, and bring me your book."
- Encourage your child to give directions. Follow his or her directions as he or she explains how to build a tower of blocks.
- Play games with your child such as "house." Exchange roles in the family, with your pretending to be the child. Talk about the different rooms and furnishings in the house.
- The television also can serve as a valuable tool. Talk about what the child is watching. Have him or her guess what might happen next. Talk about the characters. Are they happy or sad? Ask your child to tell you what has happened in the story. Act out a scene together, and make up a different ending.
- Take advantage of daily activities. For example, while in the kitchen, encourage your child to name the utensils needed. Discuss the foods on the menu, their color, texture, and taste. Where does the food come from? Which foods do you like? Which do you dislike? Who will clean up? Emphasize the use of prepositions by asking him or her to put the napkin on the table, in your lap, or under the spoon. Identify who the napkin belongs to: "It is my napkin." "It is Daddy’s." "It is John’s."
- While shopping for groceries, discuss what you will buy, how many you need, and what you will make. Discuss the size (large or small), shape (long, round, square), and weight (heavy or light) of the packages.

SPEECH SOUND PRODUCTION/ARTICULATION

One of my all-time favorite speech therapy websites is “Mommy Speech Therapy” by Heidi Hanks (www.mommyspeechtherapy.com). She is a licensed Speech Language Pathologist and mother of four who offers an abundance of tips, techniques, and resources! The reason I chose this site to share under the speech sound production section is because she offers free worksheets for each speech sound in all
word positions (initial, medial, and final). To access the practice sheets, click on “worksheets” on the top tool bar then scroll down to the sound your child needs to practice. Rather than waste paper (and possibly kill a few trees), I felt it was more efficient to have you print copies of the sound(s) only your child needs to practice (if you are unsure of their sounds check the IEP goal section). You can print copies and use them as flashcards.

When playing favorite preschool games such as Candyland, Chutes and Ladders, Hi Ho! Cherry – O, just to name a few, have your child practice saying a word correctly 2 times before they take their turn. On your turn you can model the correct pronunciation of a word. If your child is more advanced in their listening skills, you can say the word and have your child tell you if you said it the right way or wrong way. Children LOVE to be the teacher. You can also print two copies of a sound page (I would suggest gluing the pictures onto cardstock to make them more durable) and play Go Fish or Memory.

My strongest recommendation, however, is to only practice words/sounds your child can say correctly either on their own or after your verbal model. You DO NOT want to spend the summer reinforcing incorrect sound productions.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES (adapted from Becky Ross, MACCC/SLP)

Dayton and the surrounding areas have wonderful parks and museums for kids. Check a few out! [http://www.10best.com/destinations/ohio/dayton/attractions/parks/](http://www.10best.com/destinations/ohio/dayton/attractions/parks/)

Stay close to home and check out these parks in Beavercreek [http://ci.beavercreek.oh.us/old/services/parks-rec/park.htm#Shoup](http://ci.beavercreek.oh.us/old/services/parks-rec/park.htm#Shoup)

Or…

**Kennedy Park in Kettering (next to Polen Farms) off of Bigger Road (Splash Park, accessible)**

**Community Park in Centerville accessible and spray pad 222 North Main Street**

**Orchardly Park in Oakwood. Has a spray ground and huge sandbox. Delaine Ave (between Orchard & Wonderly) Oakwood.**

**The fountains at the Greene or at Riverscape. They often offer kids shows.**

**The miniature trains that take kids around Carillon park for a small fee (check out the CPS railway schedule through the Carillon park website) [http://www.daytonhistory.org](http://www.daytonhistory.org)**

**Ride the new carousel at the Carillon.**
**Check out the lovely and adventure filled Wegerzyn Gardens (1301 East Seibenthaler Avenue) one of the areas treasures for young families!**
http://www.metroparks.org/Parks/WegerzynGarden/ChildrensDiscoveryGarden


**Here’s a neat little waterfall, just a short hike from the parking lot (not very stroller friendly though). It is called Charleston falls and it is in Tipp City.  http://www.miamicountyparks.com/Park.aspx?c=CFP**

**Go camping at Hocking Hills or any of our beautiful state parks.**
http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/parks/overnightfacilities/camping/tabid/19426/Default.aspx

**Take a hike around Glen Helen Park in Yellow Springs.  http://glen.antiochcollege.org/glen_helen/**

**And since you’re in Yellow Springs stop by Young’s Dairy for fun family time and a treat!  http://youngsdairy.com**

**Go to a parade, see some fireworks! Have a lemonade stand. Fly a kite. Catch a fish.**

**Lay a blanket on a lawn and listen to a band at a community park.**

**Rent a canoe and pack a lunch, just 20 minutes away!  http://bellbrookcanoerental.com**

Road trip!

**COSI and the Indianapolis Children’s Museum’s are some of the best in the country and just a short drive away!**

**We are so lucky to have two wonderful zoos less than 2 hours way!**
http://www.colszoo.org/
http://www.cincinnatiusa.com/attractionsandevents/

**Check out these caves...about 1 ½ hours away (may not be stroller accessible or wheel chair accessible so call first).**
http://www.ohiocaverns.com/

**GREAT APPS FOR READING AND ACADEMIC SKILLS**

*Reading Comprehension – Fiction for Kindergarten and First Grade* by Abitalk Incorporated ($2.99)
*Reading Comprehension – Grade 1 & 2 – Super Reader* by Power Math Apps ($0.99)
*Kids Reading Comprehension Level 1 Passages for iPad* by Angela Reed ($0.99)
*I Like Books* by Grasshopper Apps (prices vary)
*Teach Me Toddler* by 24x7 digital LLC ($0.99)
*Teach Me Kindergarten* by 24x7 digital LLC ($1.99)

Wishing you a safe and fantastic summer!  I look forward to seeing many of your children in the fall.  
Diane Bowers, MACCC/SLP