ALL AGES AND GRADES

School is not in session...

How can my child work on his/her speech & language skills?

If your child is working on **speech sounds**....

(what we usually focus on in speech-language therapy is increasing awareness of the target sound in words, and getting a high number of correct productions)

1

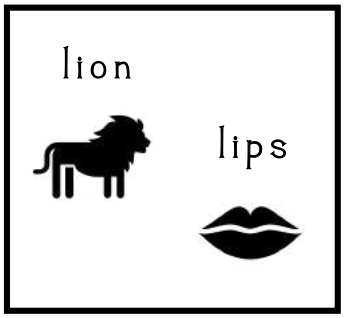
First, check your child's IEP or other paperwork to make sure you know which sounds or patterns your child is working on, and what position or level (ex: L in the beginning of words & short sentences, S at the end of words, or final consonants in words). Keep in mind that you will want to practice one sound or pattern at a time.

2 Make (or search online) for a list of words with your child's sound(s) in the right spot. Try to find a list of at least 10-20 words that are fairly common one- or two-syllable words, and write them down. You can have your child draw a picture next to each one - you will use this list to practice later! (You can also use index cards to create your own flashcards.)

Helpful websites for lists:

https://www.home-speech-home.com/speech-therapy-word-lists.html

http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?page_id=55



Spending 5 minutes a day (or every other day) practicing your child's sounds can be very effective! You can have your child say each word on your list 5 times each correctly, make up a simple or silly sentence for each word, or incorporate some of the following activities to make it more fun!

Pull out a board game (checkers, Sorry, etc.) or a puzzle, and have your child say a target word 5 times before taking a turn or adding a piece to the puzzle.

Find some dice, and take turns saying a target word the number of times that comes up on the dice. Each person then receives that many "points" - keep a tally and declare a winner at the end!

Read a book together, and listen for words with your child's target sounds. Practice the words on each page.

You may need to remind your child how to make the sound; say, "Look at my mouth! See how I do X to make this sound? Let's look in a mirror together. Now you try!"

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School is not in session...

How can my child work on his/her speech & language skills?

If your child is working on **language skills**....

(Exact language skills targeted in your child's IEP will vary, but may include things like increasing overall understanding & use of vocabulary words, answering & asking WH questions, understanding how items go together in categories, understanding how two things are similar and different, using correct verb tenses, expanding the length of sentences, describing, and more.)

PLAY

Many language skills can be targeted through playing together with an adult! Choose an activity such as Lego blocks, Play-doh, catch, dinosaurs, or action figures, and follow your child's lead. Have your characters interact & talk with each other, narrate aloud what you are doing or creating, or sort things into groups that are alike (ex: all the big dinosaurs, or all the red pieces).

When interacting with each other, model full sentences and expand on what your child says (add 1-2 words).

Child: "Her can fly."
Adult: "Yes, she can fly fast!"

Child: "Here a cookie."
Adult: "That is a big cookie! Can you make a small cookie too?"
Child: "Here!"
Adult: "Thank you! I love chocolate cookies."

Child: "Uh oh! Tower all gone."
Adult: "Oh, the tower fell down! How can we fix it?"

TIP: Sometimes we might use "communication temptations" in therapy - where we might deliberately leave a tight lid on a container or put something out of reach on purpose - so the child will need to request help.

If you need online book options, try getepic.com (free 30 day trial) or storylineonline.com (free).

GAMES

Playing simple games such as Sneaky Snacky Squirrel, Memory, Hi Ho Cherry-o, Go Fish, & Uno can provide great opportunities to practice turn taking skills, following directions, asking and answering questions, using full sentences, understanding concepts such as more/less and next/first/last, and many more skills!

BOOKS

Reading books together is one of the best ways to build language skills!

Choose a picture book to read together. Read the words, but also talk about the pictures; read books more than once!

- Point out details you notice, and try to guess together what might happen next (ex: "Look, she has a raincoat and rain boots. What kind of weather do you think it is outside? What season is it?").
- Connect details from the book to your life (ex: "Look, they are going to the petting zoo! Remember when we went? What were your favorite animals?").
- Talk about how the characters might be feeling (ex: "Oh, she lost her favorite toy! How would that make you feel?) in the different situations in the story.

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School is not in session...

How can my child work on his/her speech & language skills?

If your child is working on **language skills**....

(Exact language skills targeted in your child's IEP may vary, but may include things like increasing overall understanding and use of vocabulary, utilizing context clues, understanding how items go together in categories, understanding how two things are similar/different, using correct verb tenses, describing, summarizing, multiple meaning words, understanding main idea, perspective taking, problem solving and more.)

VIDEOS/MOVIES

Watch short videos (such as Simon's Cat on YouTube) together. Have your child identify the different characters, and retell what happened, using whole sentences (which can target summarizing, main idea, past tense verbs, and sequencing). You can also do this for longer shows or movies!

BOOKS

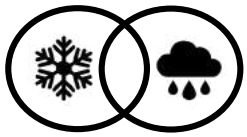
Choose a book to read together; consider reading one chapter or section at a time. As you read, or after you finish a section, talk about things like:

- Who is the main character? How would you describe him/her (appearance, personality, etc.)? Do you have anything in common?
- What problems do the characters face? How did they (or how could you) solve them? How are they feeling?
- What is the setting? (where the story takes place)
- Were there any words you didn't recognize in this part? Let's go back and see if we can figure out what it means using the words around it (or the context).
- Did you notice any multiple meaning words? What do they mean? (Examples: trunk, club, fly, last, check, handle)
- What do you think will happen in the next chapter or section?

WEATHER

Talk about what the weather is like today, and think about keeping a chart for the week or month. For younger students, you might use more simple terms like rainy or sunny, and compare/contrast the different types of weather with a Venn diagram.

For older students, you can look together at the probability of precipitation (ex" "Is it more likely to be cloudy or sunny at 4:00 pm today?") and look up more complex weather terms (humidity and what it means, cloud types, etc.)



GAMES

Many board and card games work on valuable language skills like turn taking, using complete sentences, describing, comparing/contrasting, perspective taking, & more. Games such as Scattergories, Apples to Apples, Bubble Talk, Guess Who, Clue, Uno, Catch Phrase, & Catan Junior are all good choices!

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Dear SLP/Parent,

I hope you find this useful for your student(s) in case of an emergency or extended school closing for weather, illness, etc. Please note: this is not intended as a substitute for direct speech-language therapy; rather, this is intended to provide you with some suggestions on helping to maintain your student's progress with his/her overall communication skills when school is not able to be in session.

If you are in need of other speech-language ideas, please check out my blog (www.slpnataliesnyders.com) or other materials (www.shopnataliesnyders.com)! Find an overall explanation of speech & language disorders in the school setting at bit.ly/slphandouts.

Natalie

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About the Author:

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