

# Lesson 3: Describing Play

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Describe what you and your child are doing to highlight the fact that you are doing the same thing. Be aware that the type of language you use can have a large impact on your child’s understanding and use of language. The following strategies will help make describing your play most effective.

**Simplify your language:** Use simple language that is slightly more complex than your child’s language. For example, if your child is not yet speaking, use single words; if he or she uses single words, use 2-3 word phrases. You can also simplify your language by leaving out higher level parts of language (e.g., “Feed baby” instead of “You are feeding the baby”).

Child’s Communication	Model
Pre-intentional or non-conventional gestures	Intentional Gestures + single words
Word approximations or single words	Single words and 2-word phrases
2-word phrases	Simple phrase speech
Simple phrase speech	Phrase speech with descriptors
Phrase speech with descriptors	Complex phrase speech

**Speak slowly:** Slow down your rate of speech. The slower you speak, the more your child will be able to pick out the important words and meaning. Although you want to provide a running commentary, make sure to give your child a chance to respond. Pause between comments to give your child time to process the auditory information.

**Stress important words:** Children often have a hard time recognizing important words in sentences. You can help your child pick up “meaning” words by pausing before important words and stressing them (“We have a...BUNNY”).

**Be repetitive:** Use the same language over and over. You can use the same phrase repetitively (“Down it goes. Down it goes”) or you can repeat specific important words (“Car is rolling. Roll, roll. Rolling fast”).

**Expand your child’s language:** Expand your child’s language by imitating your child’s speech and then *adding* more information. By adding more words, you revise and complete your child’s speech - *without direct correction*. For example, if your child says “buh”, you could say “ball”. If your child says “train” you could say “yellow train”. If your child says “I push car”, you could say “I am pushing the car”.