



## **NARRATIVE SKILLS ACTIVITIES**

Being able to describe things and events and tell stories.

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### **Talking and Listening: Practical Ideas for Parents**

by Texas Education Agency (1996)

Preschoolers who are getting ready to read expand their knowledge of the building blocks of oral and written language, and their use and appreciation of language. Learn activities parents can use at home to support children's growth in each of these areas.

Children learn the sounds of language by listening to people talk. As children learn to talk with others, they ask questions, learn the meanings of words, and find out interesting and important things about the world around them.

Many experiences of listening and talking prepare children to read.

Here are some activities to try:

- Begin talking, singing, and reading frequently to your children when they are babies.
- When giving directions to your younger children, use short sentences and explain clearly what you want them to do. As they grow older, increase the length of the directions using words that describe (for example, instead of saying, "Get the book," you can say, "Please bring me your favorite storybook. It is on the desk in your room.>").
- Ask your children questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Some questions that help them to talk more openly

are "Why do you think that happened?" "What do we do next?"  
"What would happen if we did it this way?" "What can we do  
about that?" "How can we make this better?"

- Listen carefully as your children talk to you. Answer their questions and take time to explain things to them.
- Teach your children songs and poems that are fun to sing and say (for example, songs like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and poems like "Wee Willie Winkie" or "Little Miss Muffet").
- Play games such as "Red-Light Green-Light," "Mama, Puedo," and "Simon Says" that require talking, listening, following directions, and giving directions.
- Begin talking, singing, and reading frequently to your children when they are babies.
- Set aside a special time each day to read aloud to your children.
- Read stories and informational books aloud for as long as you can read and your children can listen. If your children become restless, lay the book aside and come back to it at another time.
- Read stories to your children and have them tell the stories back to you.
- Record yourself reading a book and give the tape to your children. Let them play the tape and read along in the book on their own.
- Have your children "read" to you from a picture book by making up their own stories about the pictures.

- Take nature walks in the neighborhood or at local parks. Spend time talking in detail with your children about things you can see, hear, or touch such as leaves, rain, and caterpillars.
- When possible, take your children on trips to zoos, museums, nature trails, and historical sites. Talk about the interesting and unusual things you see.
- Draw pictures with your children and take turns telling stories about the pictures.
- Pick a topic of interest to your children and have them learn new things about it. Ask them to tell you and other family members what they have learned.
- Watch educational television programs with your children and talk with them about those programs.

Adapted from: Beginning Reading Instruction: Practical Ideas for Parents. (1996). Texas Education Agency.

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