Help Your Child Communicate…

Using New Words

Through Hands-on Experiences

Children learn new words, and expand their vocabulary through their day-to-day experiences. When your child is very focused and all his or her senses are involved in an experience, the words used to describe that experience become more meaningful. This makes it far more likely that the new words will be remembered. So for example, learning animal names can happen when you are at the zoo experiencing all the sights, sounds and smells(!). Here are a few ideas for teaching new words:

- **Focus on a single 'theme'** for at least a week. For example, if your theme is animals, throughout the week you could: pull out the toy animals and play with them, making sure you name them as you go; get some books from the library that have the same animals; make a trip to the zoo and see and hear the animals; plan a snack of animal crackers; or play a game guessing the animal by making animal noises.
- **Make sure your child hears the new word over and over and over**. You cannot say new words too often. You may sound like a broken record but this is necessary. Make it a goal to say the new word 5 to 6 times during a single playtime.
- **Highlight the new words** by saying them a little louder, stretching them out and pausing just before you say them. This will help to focus your child's attention on the new word.
- **Don't try to teach too many words at once**. Pick 3 or 4 words that are related (eg animals, food, etc.) at a time. If your child is bombarded with too many new words, it can be confusing and difficult to remember.

At first you will have to think about this strategy. After a while, though, it will become automatic. For the next two weeks, place this sheet on the fridge and keep track of how often you gave the strategy a try.

I gave this a try:

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