

AACS Speech –Language Pathologists Series



*Supporting the
Special Needs
Community from
birth through life*



*Doing Great Things Since
1951!*

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Using Outdoor Play to Expand Your Child’s Language Skills

Playground activities:

Play peek-a-boo through the various holes in the equipment. Reinforce hide, under, up, top, bottom, climb, jump. Use the tubular slides to imitate sounds and words back and forth, listening to your echoes.

Use predictable phrases to increase spontaneous speech. Hold your child’s wing in the air, and say Ready, Set, Go!! After several times of doing this, don’t say “go” and see if your child will fill in the missing word. Swing sets are awesome – try swinging child by pulling and letting go of feet (gently) so you are face to face, some kids are so attentive in a swing. This will work on the slide too. Block your child from going down the slide until you (or your child) say “go”. Cue your child as needed to say or sign requests for up, push, swing, ready...set...go, stop, again, wheee!, up high, off.



Label body parts with anticipation: “I’m gonna get your feet, knees, belly, chin, hair, etc.” “ready, set, go” model and wait for gesture or sound/word.

Other activities, such as throwing and kicking a ball to practice turn-taking are also great.

Bubbles and Chalk:

Take advantage of siblings being home from school to work on ‘my turn’. Use bubbles outside and give each child a turn to blow or pop the bubbles. They will need to gesture or say ‘my turn’ in order to get a turn. This also teaches turn taking and patience.



Use colored chalk to teach colors/following directions. Make circles of different colors on the driveway. Give directions, “Let’s find blue!” “Let’s go to yellow!” This can also work as follow the leader to increase imitation skills. Use a sibling as leader so everyone feels included. Draw chalk roads and tracks for cars and trains (go, stop, fast, slow)

Nature walks and nature discovery: go to the park if you don’t have a yard, you can look at cards of simple objects such as a tree and try to find a real one outside.

Water Play:

On a hot day, water activities are great. Take plastic people and animal figures into a wading pool or large bucket. Add bubble bath to create lots of bubbles. Use your imagination and engage your child in imaginary play, modeling words, phrases and concepts. Have toy animals “swim”, drink, etc. You can label body parts – “Let’s get your belly wet!” identify actions – splash, kick, or identify objects in the pool – boat , bucket. Also, use for requesting ‘in’ and ‘out’ of pool. Wash the car together. Model words, phrases and concepts as you go (dirty, clean, on, off, wet, dry, bubbles, pop, water, squirt, spray, wash, scrub, rinse, etc).

Sand box play: for following directions and building vocabulary (dump, fill, cover, under, etc).

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