

Help Your Child Use Longer Sentences (Expanding)

- We want your child to start using longer sentences.
- Typically, by 2 years of age, children are using 2-4 words in simple phrases (e.g., “Daddy hat”; “truck go down”) and by 3 years of age, they are using 5-8 words in a sentence.
- The tips provided in this handout can be used whether you are trying to have your child use 2-3 words or 5-8 words.
- When your child starts using longer sentences you will notice his messages will become more grammatically complex as well. Working on grammar may also become a goal in therapy.

Tips

- Repeat exactly what your child has said and add one word (e.g., Child: “Juice.” Adult: “More juice.”).
- Try to add words in different locations: beginning, middle, or end (e.g., Child: “Cookie.” Adult: “More cookie”, “Cookie gone.” Child: “Want cookie.” Adult: “I want cookie”, “Want more cookie.”).
- Try to add different kinds of words:
 - Action words: “cookie broke”, “eat cookie”
 - Describing words: “big cookie”, “my cookie”
 - Location words: “cookie in”, “cookie on”
- Try to add only one more word to what your child has said (e.g., if your child says 2 words, you say 3-4 words).
- It is okay if you give more information sometimes, but keep it short and simple! (e.g., Child: “Cow eating.” Adult: “Cow is eating hay! He is hungry.”).

Reference: “Home Program-Expanding” - Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services Revised February 2004; “Expanding” - Adapted from 1992 Communication Skill Builders, Inc. (602) 323-7500, North York General Hospital Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services; “Expansion” - Community Speech and Language Program, York Central Hospital, September, 1993.