

## Back to Basics: Keeping it Low Tech in a High Tech World

In this high-tech world, so many electronic toys market their ability to help your child learn. Do children really need flashing lights, sound effects, and touch screens to learn language skills? NO! Young children learn language and interaction skills best through play and interaction with others. When interacting with their children, parents use more words, more words specific to the activity, engage in more back and forth conversation, and respond more to their child's messages when interacting with traditional toys and books, than with electronic toys (Sosa, 2015). This back and forth conversation builds a child's understanding of different words and their ability to share a meaningful message in a functional way.

Here are some ideas of basic and simple, fun activities to do with your child:

### Books:



Follow your child's lead by letting them hold the book and flip the pages. Wait and watch what your child is pointing to or looking at. Talk about what they are interested in by labelling or making a comment about it.

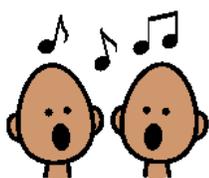
Try to avoid books on video or on tablets. Using physical books teaches early literacy skills.

If you do choose to watch electronic books (i.e. YouTube), try pausing the book on each page to talk about what you see or mute the sound and narrate the book yourself while the video plays!



### Songs:

Children love music and your kids don't mind your singing voice! They also love when you sing songs over and over again. Try to sing with your child and use gestures instead of listening to kids songs.



Once you've sung a familiar song through a few times, pause at a key point in the song and wait with anticipation to see if your child will fill in the word or the action, 'The wheels on the bus go (PAUSE)....round and round'. Add clapping, instruments or even some pots and spoons!

Some song ideas include: Itsy Bitsy Spider, Wheels on the Bus, Head and Shoulders, Old MacDonald, Sleeping Bunnies, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, Ring Around the Rosie, Row Your Boat.

If you need ideas for songs to learn, listen to children's songs on YouTube to learn to tune before you sing with your child. One channel from YouTube to check out is Super Simple Songs.

Get creative and make up your own songs to familiar tunes as you go through your daily routines. As you go upstairs, sing to the tune 'Farmer in the Dell'.



**We're climbing up the stairs.**

**We're climbing up the stairs.**

**Here we go, up, up, up,**

**Climbing up the stairs!**

### Games without toys (also called People Games):

Some games you could play include: peek-a-boo, chase game, hide and go seek, tickle game, horsey ride, swinging in a blanket (2 adults needed), and action songs



- Play the game a few times so your child is familiar with the routine
  - Play the game again, pause and wait. Your child will look at you, make a sound, or a word to keep the game going
    - Example: Tickle game – First, sit facing your child, say ‘Tickle!’, raise your hands then tickle. Raise your hands again, wait, and then say ‘Tickle!’.
- Again, raise hands, wait to see if your child will say ‘Tickle’ then tickle them!

### Toys:

When using toys to play think of these tips:

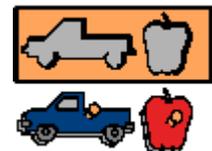
- Set it up – play in a safe play space, have a set of toys available to play with – if your child has short attention for some toys have a few options to rotate through one at a time
- Join in and play!
  - Get down on the floor with your child
  - Pick up a toy like your child is playing with
  - Copy what they do with the toy, take a turn
  - Add words to what you are doing with the toy
  - Do something new with your toy so your child can copy you!



### Types of Toys:



- Fine Motor and sensory toys- stamps, colouring, playdough, slime
  - Active play toys– balls and sports equipment, ball towers/ramps, ride-ons
  - Toy sets - Farm animals and barn, cars and garage, kitchen and food,
  - Building toys - blocks, Lego, boxes, Mr. Potato Head
  - Imaginative toys – kitchen/restaurant, babies, dress up, puppets, action figures, stuffed animals
- Musical instruments
  - Shape sorters and puzzles - Put pieces in containers or bags to ‘open’, get ‘more’ and ‘take out’. Once you label the word, add a word to it. Example: ‘loud firetruck, go in, big elephant’.



### Reference:

Sosa, A.V. (2015). Association of the Type of Toy Used During Play With the Quantity and Quality of Parent-Infant Communication. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 170(2), 132-138.