

THE BEST WAY TO GROW YOUR BABY'S VOCABULARY

One of the best ways for your baby to learn to listen and talk is to fill their world with words. That means talk, talk, talk, and talk some more. You may be asking; how many words do they really need to be exposed to and hear? Research tells us that children who hear 40 million words in the first four years of life grow up to be better readers and do better in school.

Hi, I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway from Hearing First and we're here to support you as parents, as families of a child with hearing loss so that your child can learn to listen, talk, read, and thrive just like a child with typical hearing.

I know 40 million words sounds overwhelming and like a lot but there's many ways that you can expose your child to 40 million words. Today we're going to talk about the language building strategy, Play-by-Play, which allows your child to hear lots and lots of words to build their brain.

Think of it much like a radio or a Play-by-Play sports announcer where you describe all the actions and the thoughts and the words that go with what's surrounding your baby. Play-by-Play is when you use familiar phrases, familiar commands, familiar sayings, and when you describe and put words to all the actions that your baby is doing and that you're doing, and including those things that you may be thinking and feeling.

For example, when your child is thirsty and wanting a drink, instead of just going and getting them their water and saying, "*Here's your water,*" or "*Here's your milk,*" instead, put lots of words to it.

Describe every step that you're doing. Oh, you must be thirsty. Let's get you a drink. Here, let's open the refrigerator. What's in here? I see milk, I see juice, I see water. What should we drink?

And then, oh, you want some milk? Let's get the milk out. Ooh, it's cold. Yeah, and we need to get the cup down as well. Let's pour the milk in the cup and you can even make up a fun song.

"Pouring, pouring, pouring in the milk."

And then, you hand the milk. Oh, you're so thirsty. Hand the milk to your baby, your child. And as they're drinking, go, "*Oh my goodness, you're drinking that milk and you're drinking it all gone. It is so yummy, isn't it? Wow. You were very thirsty. Are you all finished? Okay, let's put your cup in the sink and we need to turn on the water. Turn on the water and rinse out the cup. Ah, so we can make it all clean. Okay, let's go play.*"

Do you hear the difference of how many more words when you describe while the action is going on compared to, "*Oh, you're thirsty? Here's your milk, or here's your water.*"

Big differences, and just that one little everyday moment begins to add up into that piggy bank towards 40 million words. And as your child develops and gets older, your Play-by-Play strategy may start looking a little different.

For example, you may start describing words that you're thinking and feeling. So, for example, you may talk about that you feel so sad, something makes you feel sad, and why it makes you feel sad. It could be that you could be discussing about that you're stressed out, that you can't find your car keys, and it stresses you out so much when you can't find your car keys.

Where could I have put my car keys? Hmm, I wonder if they're in my purse. I'm going to check in my purse. I bet they're in my purse. Oh my, they're not in my purse. Uh-oh. Maybe they're still in my coat pocket. I'll go look there. This makes me very anxious when I can't find my keys.

So, remember, it's not just about the quantity of words or the number of words, that's important, but it's also important about the kind of words or the quality of words that you're using. In other words, sometimes we get stuck in a rut and we only use the words that we think the child will understand.

So, they tend to be simple vocabulary words like cup, drink, water, versus what I call \$5 words, that are words that are more complex so that once your child learns that a boat, be sure not, if it's a canoe to call it a canoe, or a ship, or a tugboat. Otherwise, every boat just stays a boat. And you want your child to have a well-rounded, expansive exposure to words and expansive vocabulary.

Remember, your little one isn't born smart. You make them smart through these everyday interactions by just sharing your words. When you talk, read, sing, you're setting them up for success. Play-by-Play is just one language building strategy and there's many more easy, simple ones just like this one that you can do. If you'd like to learn more, we have great downloadable and handouts at the link below.

No matter where you are in this journey or what you may be feeling, Hearing First is here to support you every step of the way. Subscribe to our YouTube channel, check out our website, and download the link below.