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Activities for Strengthening Expressive Language Skills in School Aged Children

1. Increase opportunities for discussions and debates at home. Current news and events are excellent sources for topics of discussions. Encourage your child to express opinions and back it with supporting statements and facts.
2. Reduce your child's exposure to nonverbal activities such as videogames.
3. Encourage your child to verbally problem solve and talk through problems and worries.
4. Increase your expectation for use of complete sentences and specific vocabulary during discussions. Discourage your child from using nonspecific words such as stuff, things etc.
5. Encourage your child to express complete thoughts. Ask for explanations and more information from your child.
6. Have your child practice paraphrasing stories. The stories can be from books, conversations, T.V. programs/movies, daily events and past experiences.
7. Familiarize your child with vocabulary that will enable them to verbally sequence information better. Help them begin to use terminology such as first, then, later, finally etc. during verbal discourse.
8. Have your child explain jokes, riddles, puns and absurdities.
9. Encourage your child's participation in activities that require the exchange of information and dialogue. Drama clubs, debate teams, science clubs, public speaking classes etc.
10. Have your child tutor or teach a younger child to do something such as a sport, board game or other activity.
11. Play board games that provide language enriching experiences such as Cranium's Cadoo, Scattergories, Taboo, Blurt, Monopoly etc.
12. Have your child practice verbally giving directions to some location they are familiar with.

Effective expressive language skills are not only important for outward communication with others but verbal language is also a facilitator of problem solving, memory, and learning. Most everyone engages in "self talk" where we internally verbalize our thoughts to ourselves which allows us to become better problems solvers and "rememberers". We internally use language to condense large amounts of information to allow us to understand and remember it better. We engage in internal dialogue to identify potential problems and practice solutions before something occurs. We use "self talk" to sequence our way through large tasks. We use "self talk" to help regulate our emotions and feelings. Expressive language skills are integral not only to communication with others but are necessary to facilitate problem solving, memory and emotional regulation.