Imitate & Expand

What is it?

Imitating and **expanding** involves modeling two important conversational skills: listening and responding in a way that reflects understanding.

Imitating is *repeating* a child's sounds or words back to the child.

Expanding is both imitating the child and *adding new information.*

PC TALK Strategy Video
Imitate & Expand

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https://talk.ku.edu/tools/videos/

Why is it important?

Imitating child vocalizations and words shows the child they were *heard and understood.*

Expanding by adding new words helps the child build vocabulary for concepts they already know.

Children are more likely to communicate in the future when caregivers are responsive to their communication.

If a child's words are unclear, imitating allows the child to hear the correct form of communication. For example, if a child says, "I goed there," the caregiver can say "I went there."

Getting Started

*Having conversations takes many different skills. We have to first watch and listen, and then use those skills to respond in a way that shows others we **hear and understand** them.*
The strategy we are going to focus on today - Imitating and Expanding - will help children develop these skills.

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Ways to Imitate & Expand

Imitate sounds

Imitate the child's sounds. Sometimes, a child will respond to your imitation with another sound. You can imitate the sound a second time and a third time, promoting reciprocal, or "back-and-forth," interactions. In this way, children practice skills they will need for having conversations.

Child

> Ahhhhh

Caregiver

> Ahhhhh

> Ah-boo!

> Ah-boo!

Model back words

When a child comes close to saying words, imitate the child using the correct word.

> Ba ba

> Bottle. Bottle, please!

Imitate, then expand to add more

Expand on what a child says by imitating the general idea the child expressed, and then add more to that communication.

> Car

> That car is going fast!

Teach new names for objects

There are many words that mean the same thing: puppy, dog; kitty, cat; cup, glass. Teach children different names for objects.

> My tummy.

> Yes, that's your stomach.

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Imitate a child's vocalizations or words back to the child, and expand by adding new information or words.

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Sometimes a child tries to say a word, but it's not quite right. Rather than repeating back exactly what the child says, say the correct form of the word. Try not to tell the child they said the word wrong. As they grow, they will be more able to say words correctly.

> Lellow.

> Yes, yellow!

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Imitating & Expanding with Children Who Use Gestures & Sounds

Ideas for Repeating Back & Adding New Information During Activities

Play

- Imitate the sounds children make while playing so the child is more likely to make more sounds. As long as the child is making sounds, keep imitating those sounds.
  Child: "*Ma ma ma.*"
  Caregiver: (while smiling and making eye contact) "*Ma ma ma.*"

- Give ideas while playing dolls and listen and respond when a child makes sounds.
  Caregiver: "*Baby is going to sleep.*"
  Child: "*Ba.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, baby is going to sleep.*"

- Finger paint together and imitate by saying the colors the child points to.
  Child: (points to green)
  Caregiver: "*You want green paint.*"

Daily Routines

- Talk about what is happening during diaper change. Listen and respond to the child.
  Caregiver: "*It's time to change your diaper.*"
  Child: "*Dah*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, time to change your diaper.*"

- Watch for children to reach for or point at feeding items. Model how to ask for things.
  Child: (reaches for bottle)
  Caregiver: (while giving child bottle) "*Milk, please.*"

- While playing outside, watch for children to sign words. Imitate and expand with signs.
  Child: (claps hands together in an attempt to sign "ball")
  Caregiver: (signs) "*Ball, that's a red ball.*"

Books

- Be responsive when a child comes to you with a book.
  Child: (holding book) "*buh.*"
  Caregiver: "*Book. You want to read this book about dogs.*" (reads with child)

- While looking at books, respond when children point to pictures by imitating and providing new information.
  Child: (points to a dog) "*Woo woo.*"
  Caregiver: "*Woof woof. That's what the dog says.*"

- Be responsive when a child is ready to move on to the next page of a book.
  Child: "*Mah*" (tries to turn page)
  Caregiver: "*More - Let's see what's next.*" (turns page)

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Imitating & Expanding with Children Who Use Words

Ideas for Repeating Back & Adding New Information During Activities

Play

- Play puzzles together and expand when a child names a puzzle piece.
  Child: "*Fire truck.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, that's a red fire truck. Do you see the ladder on the side?*"

- Build a block tower together and teach the child new words for what you are building.
  Child: "*I build tower.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, you're building a very tall tower. It's a skyscraper.*"

- Play kitchen together and look for ways to imitate and expand on sharing.
  Child: "*Mine.*"
  Caregiver: "*Mine – you want a plate, too. Let's find a plate for you.*"

Daily Routines

- Listen for opportunities to expand while children are cleaning up.
  Child: "*I cleaning.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, you're cleaning the table so nicely.*"

- Listen for your child to say action words during bath and expand on those words.
  Child: "*We wash.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, we are washing up.*"

- During dressing, ask the child to hold out their arms to encourage talking.
  Child: "*Arms.*"
  Caregiver: (while pointing) "*Yes, these are your arms, and here are your hands.*"

Books

- Let children "read" books to you. Listen and respond to their "reading."
  Child: "*Dat big bird.*"
  Caregiver: "*That is a big bird. It's an ostrich.*"

- Be responsive when a child comes to you with a book.
  Child: "*Book.*"
  Caregiver: "*Yes, let's read the book.*" (reads with child)

- Give time for children to respond to pages in books. Expand on child responses by adding more information.
  Child: "*Boat.*"
  Caregiver: "*It's a sail boat. The wind makes it go. This one is a fishing boat. They catch fish on that boat.*"

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