

## About Us

Everything we learn about child development is made possible by the participation of families like yours.

The Infant and Child Studies Consortium is a research group at the University of Maryland's flagship campus studying child development in the areas of hearing and speech science, human development, linguistics, and psychology. Our research relies on the generous participation of local families. Sign up with us today on our website or by phone or email!

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### References

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- <sup>2</sup>**Newman, Rochelle** (2005). The cocktail party effect in infants revisited: Listening to one's name in noise. *Developmental Psychology*, 41, pp. 352-362.
- <sup>3</sup>**Newman, Rochelle** (2009). Infants' listening in multitalker environments: Effect of the number of background talkers. *Attention, Perception & Psychophysics*, 71, pp. 822-836.
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# Encouraging Language Learning

**How to support  
your child's development**



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Children use an amazing array of built-in biological tools to learn language from the world around them.<sup>1</sup> Learning language is a uniquely human endeavor that children largely do on their own, but there are ways parents can support and encourage this process. The researchers at the University of Maryland Infant and Child Studies Consortium have compiled tips for parents to help their children during this period.

## Spend Time Talking with Your Child

Research shows that children with parents who spend more time speaking to them develop larger vocabularies. The language exposure a child receives can have lasting impacts well into their adult life.<sup>7</sup>



### What can parents do to help encourage new word learning?

**Read with your child:** the more sentence variety your child hears, the more words your child learns.

**Use fewer commands;** instead ask your child more questions and engage in conversation.

**Narrate to your child** about what you are doing as you go through your day.

## Turn Down the Radio and TV, Look Up from your Phone

Children are far more easily distracted by noise than adults. Even noise levels that adults may not notice can pose a distraction for infants, inhibiting their ability to pay attention to crucial speech cues.<sup>2</sup>

Young children seem to have particular difficulties when the background noise is another person talking.<sup>3</sup> A recent study with a parent-child word learning game found that 2-year-olds were unable to learn new words during the games that their parent interrupted with a cell phone call.<sup>4</sup>

**Even if your child does not appear to pay attention to the TV, radio, or your phone call, the background noise can impact their ability to learn from what you are saying and the world around them.**



## Use Open-Ended Questions

Children improve their memories with age *and* practice. Research has shown that parents who use open-ended questions (**e.g. What did we do at the playground?**) as opposed to yes/no questions (**e.g. Did we play on the slide?**) better promote their children's narrative abilities and their facility for remembering past events.<sup>5</sup>

**Ask open-ended questions about when and where things happened. Let your child take the lead in conversation!**



PLEASE



THANK YOU



SORRY