

Tips to Develop Oral Language with Children in the Junior End of the School

(Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st class, 2nd class)

Some key areas in terms of language learning are listed below (highlighted in red) with some specific tips to develop each one. There are also ideas for making the suggested activities more challenging for the children.

Attention and listening		
Tips/ideas	Examples	Make the activity more challenging
Following simple instructions during various activities.	Colouring: colour the cat brown.	Colouring: colour the cat's tail brown and its eyes blue.
	P.E: run to the wall.	PE: run to the wall, do 3 Jumping Jacks and walk on your way back.
	Lego: put the red piece on top of the blue piece.	Lego: put the red piece on top of the blue piece and choose another colour.
Listening and identifying sounds	Play sounds from "YouTube" such as a baby laughing or a dog barking.	After playing and identifying the sounds, talk about where you might hear those sounds.
	Listening walk: go to the kitchen, garden, sitting room etc. Close eyes and talk about some of the sounds you hear.	Listening walk: draw a listening map showing where the sounds were heard.
	Same/different: listen to 2 sounds (such as Jolly Phonics) or noises (such as musical instruments) and identify if they are the same or different.	Same/different: listen to 2 different sounds repeated and identify which one was different. Eg: tin-whistle, tambourine, tin-whistle. The middle sound was different.

Vocabulary and Sentence Building		
Tips/ideas	Examples	Make the activity more challenging
Vocabulary development	<p>Categorisation: name and talk about different things found in certain places such as the kitchen. Talk about what it looks like/feels like, what it does etc.</p> <p>Also "Headbands" is a useful game for this.</p>	<p>Categorisation: odd one out: children choose the odd one out from a selection of 3 and explain their reasoning. Eg: microwave, oven, fridge. Fridge is the odd one out because it keeps food cold. Microwave and oven are used to heat food up.</p>

	Syllable work: clapping syllables in different words. Eg: elephant=el-e-phant (3)	Syllable work: can you find another word with the same number of syllables?
	Sounds: name 5 words that <u>start</u> with the same sound.	Sounds: name 5 words that <u>end</u> with the same sound.
Building sentences	Add an adjective to a noun: This is a ball → This is a bouncy/round/soft/small ball.	Add more than one adjective to a noun: This is a ball → This is a big, round, green ball.
	The child gives an instruction (imperative verbs): touch your leg with your thumb. “Simon Says” is useful in this case.	The child gives more than one instruction at a time (imperative verbs): touch your leg with your thumb and then jump.
	Barrier game: 2 children get the same picture and colours. A barrier/book is placed between them so they cannot see the picture. Child 1 gives the first instruction. Eg: colour the bear brown. Both children follow the instruction. Child 2 then gives the next instruction and both children follow the instruction. At the end, the children check their pictures and decide whether or not they are the same.	Barrier game: each child could give 2 instructions at a time. Eg: colour the bear brown and then colour the tree trunk brown.

Telling stories and Conversations		
Tips/ideas	Examples	Make the activity more challenging
Telling stories	Sequencing: talking about stories that are familiar to the children. Use the following phrases to talk about the 3 main parts of the story: “at the beginning..., in the middle..., at the end....” Other words used to sequence: “first, next, last”.	Sequence 4 or more parts of the story. Use “first, next, then, last”. Draw pictures of the different stages of their day. Eg: breakfast, playing outside, watching television, colouring. At the end of the day, the pictures could be cut out, mixed up and made into a sequencing activity. Use “before” and “after” when describing the sequence of the events. Eg: before I watched television, I had my snack.

	Discuss who, what and where questions in relation to stories. Talk about the characters in the story, the main events/actions and the settings. Eg: John played on the swing in the garden. Who=John. What= he played on the swing. Where=in the garden.	Following from who, what, where questions, discuss when, why and how questions in relation to stories. Talk about the time (last week, yesterday, many years ago), the reason behind actions (eg: Red Riding Hood went to visit granny because she wanted to give her a basket of goodies) and how the actions were completed (she walked to Granny's house through the woods).
	Make up/ complete well known stories. Eg: make up what happened after the wolf was arrested and the little pig was safe in "The Three Little Pigs".	Make up stories entirely, choosing characters, settings, actions etc.
Conversations	Finding out about our favourite things: ask family members about their favourite colour, dinner, treat, sport etc. You could call/video call aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents too.	Find out why that selection is their favourite. Document the answers in a copy. Discuss if there are common answers.
	Conversation game with family members: take turns to say something you like and dislike starting with your letter name. Eg: my name is Justin. I like jam. I dislike jogging.	Take turns to say more than one thing you like and dislike starting with your letter name. Eg: my name is Justin. I like jam and jumping. I dislike jogging and juice.
	True or false: say 2 statements about yourself (one true and one false). The other person has to decide which one is which.	Say more than 2 statements and see if the other person can work out which is the true/false statement.

Other fun ways to develop language skills:

- Telling jokes
- Tongue-twisters
- Nursery rhymes
- Finding rhyming words. Eg: bug, rug, tug.
- Memory games: I went to the zoo and I saw....(keep adding to the list).
- I spy game: something that starts with/something that rhymes with.....
- Spot the difference