

Your 8 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



8 year olds can see other people's point of view

Your 8 year old is learning so many new things, from talking with their friends and family, to reading, classroom discussions, and family outings. They talk about what happened to them and compare and connect that to what happened to other people. They change what they say to make it more clear. They even change what they say depending on how someone else feels.

How children learn language

Children learn language every day and in almost everything they do. They learn new words, new sentences, and how to play with language. Any activity that you and your child do together is a chance to learn.

Try these tips in your language

Talking tips

- **Use different types of sentences when you talk to your child.** Instead of saying, "Please eat your lunch," you could say, "Why don't you eat your lunch?"
- **Add joining words like instead of, or, if, and until that connect your child's sentences together.** If they say, "I want the banana. I don't want the apple," you could say, "You want the banana instead of the apple?"
- **Use new words when you talk to your child.** Explain what the words mean. You might say, "We need to wash the dishes frequently so that we don't run out. We need to wash the dishes a lot." Use these new words many times.

Listening tips

- **Talk about words that look or sound the same but mean something different.** Like "Petal is a part of a flower. Pedal is the place where we put our foot on a bike."
- **Teach your child different ways to remember what they hear.** Ask them to repeat what they hear out loud. Later, they can practice saying what they hear silently to themselves. Talk to them about making pictures in their mind of the things they need to remember.
- **Teach your child to ask for help when they don't understand.** Tell your child to ask questions or to ask people to repeat what they said. For example, if they don't understand a new word, they could say, "I didn't understand that word. Can you tell me what it means?"



For more information scan this QR code or visit: ahs.ca/talkbox

Activities to try

Children learn by doing

- **Play games.** Your child will learn new words and get practice describing things. Plus, these games are lots of fun for the whole family. Try games like I Spy, Guess Who?, Pictionary, Charades, and crossword puzzles.
- **Play simple memory games.** Try playing I Went on a Trip. One person starts by saying, "I went on a trip and I packed a shirt." Take turns repeating what was said and then adding something new. For example, "I went on a trip and I packed a shirt and a towel." Keep going until someone can't remember all of the items in order. This game can be played in the car, at home, or on a family outing.
- **Play word games with your child.** Ask them to name as many things as they can from a group. For example, ask them to name things that you see at the park, at the beach, or in a classroom. To make it trickier, put a time limit on it.



Children learn by reading

Reading and language go together. Reading can help your child learn to talk and listen. Talking and listening help make reading and writing easier. All of these skills are important in school. Here are some tips to keep reading fun:

- **Read out loud with your child, even if they're reading books on their own.** Listen to audiobooks together.
- **Ask your child to guess what the story is about before reading it.** Look for clues in the title and the pictures on the front page. Read the first page, then make more guesses about what the story is about. Ask questions like, "What do you think will happen next? Why? How do you know?"
- **After you read a story together, ask your child to retell the story.** Have them retell the story in their own words to you or to another family member.
- **Talk about the ending of the story.** Ask your child questions like, "What did you like most about the story?," "What did you learn from the story?," or "What would you do if you had the same problem?"
- **Make predictions.** After reading the story, talk about what you think happened after the story ended.
- **Ask your child to make pictures in their mind** of what they read.

What to expect

Children's experiences and personality will shape how they communicate. However, they do learn the same things in a similar order.

Most 8 year olds:

Talking

- say all their speech sounds correctly and are easy to understand
- use connecting words, like instead of, or, if, and until (we can't go inside until it opens)
- use different types of sentences (the cat chased the dog, the dog was chased by the cat)
- describe things using many different describing words (a horse is a type of animal found on a farm, it is large and has a mane, you put a saddle on it and ride it)

Understanding

- know who the pronouns are talking about in a sentence (my sister's friend gave a present to her on her birthday)
- know that sometimes they can't remember everything without doing something to help themselves, like saying it over and over or making a picture of it in their mind
- understand words that tell position, order, time, quantity, and space and use them to help understand the things they learn in school, like in science class (after you add some of the baking soda, make sure you stir the mixture frequently)

Social skills

- stay on topic when talking to a friend or when talking in a group
- work towards solving a problem in a group
- understand that their friends may have different opinions or ideas

Most 8 year olds:

- ask and answer questions about what they read
- can make predictions about what will happen next in a story and explain why



When to get help

Reach out for help if your child:

- has trouble saying speech sounds
- is difficult to understand
- uses short sentences when talking
- has difficulty telling you what happened in a story or at school
- has trouble with the rules of conversation, such as taking turns, staying on topic, or letting you know that they do not understand

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. For more information, visit ahs.ca/pedrehab or call Health Link at 811.

For more ideas:

- curriculum.learnalberta.ca/parents/en/home
- schools.healthiertogether.ca/en/
- alberta.ca/family-resource-networks

Screens and your child

Children learn language best from conversations with others. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to talk. Minimize screen time. Screen time is using a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. To learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit caringforkids.cps.ca.

Some children use apps or devices to communicate, which is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. These programs are designed to support communication and are not considered screen time.

