

Your 9 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



9 year olds get to the point

Your 9 year old is learning to have fun with language. They know that words and sentences can sometimes mean different things and even have hidden meanings. Your child's stories are getting longer and more creative. They also realize that sometimes getting to the point is more important than telling you everything they know.

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

- **Repeat what your child says.** Use different words that mean the same thing. If they say, "I'm so cold today," you say, "You look frozen."
- **Tell the main idea of the story.** When you tell a story or talk about books or shows, say, "I saw a great movie. It was about a man who found a time machine."
- **Guess what you think will happen next.** When you watch shows or read books, talk about what might happen, like "I think the man who found the time machine is going to get stuck in the future." Ask your child to guess what will happen next and why.

Listening tips

- **Help your child see or picture what you're talking about.** Use phrases like, "I'm drowning in money," or "She sings at the top of her lungs." Then tell your child what you meant. "I have a lot of money," or "She sings loudly."
- **Teach your child different ways to remember things.** Show them how to write short notes or draw quick pictures to help them remember what they hear and what they have to do. Remind them to repeat things over and over again and make pictures in their mind of what they need to remember.
- **Ask your child questions that will help them listen more closely.** They can listen to music, audio books, or shows. Ask questions, like "Who has the highest voice?," "Who spoke the most?," or "Is the story real or make believe?"



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

Activities to try

Children learn by doing

- **Play a drawing game when you read together.** Take turns drawing what happened in a story. When you finish the story, take turns retelling it using the pictures that you have drawn. This is a fun way to practice making pictures in your mind and a great way to help you remember things.
- **Play word games for words with multiple meanings.** Come up with as many different meanings as possible for 1 word. The word rock means to rock in a chair, rock music, or a rock on the ground. See who can come up with the most meanings and keep score.
- **Name words that sound the same but have different meanings.** They may be spelled the same or differently, such as blue and blew. Ask them to tell you what each word means. Give points for each correct set of words. This game will also help reading comprehension and spelling.
- **Make up a short story about what you are doing.** This can be when you're working around the house, doing errands, or anytime. Ask your child to give the story a name. This type of game teaches children to listen for the main idea. It also teaches concentration and comprehension.

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:

- **Encourage your child to read to others,** like younger siblings, cousins, or friends.
- **Take everyday opportunities to read when you are out.** Encourage your child to read menus, signs, labels on food items, movie signs, billboards, and cartoons.
- **Pick a special time for reading that's outside of homework time.** Let your child see you reading when you have spare time. Let them see that reading is for fun.
- **Encourage your child to tell you about the book in 1 sentence.** For example, "This book is about a boy who plays soccer."
- **Read books full of riddles, jokes, and sayings with hidden meanings.** Talk about how we can play with words and language and make unusual comparisons to make things clear. A great way to learn sayings like "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is to draw them or act them out with your child.



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 9 year olds:

Talking

- say all of their speech sounds correctly and are easy to understand
- speak in long, complete sentences and use words like if, now, though, and anyways
- tell riddles, jokes, and word plays
- tell the main idea of a story or the most important idea of what they learned

Understanding

- understand that words have several meanings (blue can be a colour, or mean sad)
- understand idioms or sayings (hard as a rock, blind as a bat, raining cats and dogs)
- understand that sometimes they need to do different things to help them remember information, like repeating it over and over, picturing it in their mind, writing it down, or drawing pictures

Social skills

- change what they have said by repeating it, rewording it, or by adding information to it so that other people understand
- makes adult-like guesses or predictions about what will happen in a story
- begin to laugh at themselves when they realize they have made a mistake or said something unexpected

Most 9 year olds:

- read and understand different types of writing (fiction, non-fiction, poetry)
- talk about what they read in their own words (paraphrasing)



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.

