



Parent Tip Sheet

Language Syntax & Morphology

Syntax is the development of sentence structure meaning your child's first attempts at putting two words together.

Morphology refers to the structure and construction of words and the rules that determine changes in word meaning; it's knowing plural forms and correct use of verb tense.

The emergence of first words typically begins around 12 months of age. Syntax typically begins when a child begins to combine words in early two word utterances (ex. Daddy work) around 18-24 months.

A child needs approximately 50 words to begin to combine them into short phrases. When children begin to learn words, they learn that some words refer to objects, some to actions and others can be used as descriptors (adjectives). In the second year of life, they begin to learn pronouns, adverbs, commands, present and past tense, suffixes and prefixes.

Syntax is one of the more delayed aspects of language for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, so it is important to be aware of ways to support these skills.



- ✓ Introduce words from many different categories: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions.
- ✓ Use the Plus One Rule: add a word to expand the length of your child's utterance to model longer sentences. Also use correct grammar, even if it means adding more than one word. E.g., if your child says "blue ball" you can say "The blue ball is big."
- ✓ Read books with repetition, such as: We're Going on a Bear Hunt or I Went Walking.
- ✓ Watch videos of people or objects in action and describe what is happening.
- ✓ Pay attention to the use of plurals with an "s", add them whenever possible. Point out words that do not use an "s" to be plural (e.g., men, children) to understand placement in space.
- ✓ Play games with "in" and "on." To focus on correlation with space.
- ✓ Highlight differences using "not," e.g., Mommy's eating, Daddy is not eating.
- ✓ Talk about he, she, it and they. E.g., He has the ball; Tom has the ball. She jumps; Mary jumps.
- ✓ Begin to use contractions at the appropriate stage. E.g., he isn't coming with us.
- ✓ Play games with regular and irregular past tense forms (at the appropriate stage). E.g., he jumped, she ate.
- ✓ Emphasize the use of "a", "the" and "an" when developmentally ready.



*Share these with your Early Intervention providers/parent to parent support providers who have experience with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and discuss ideas on how to implement these tips with your child. <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/tipsheets.html>

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