



SPEECH AND LANGUAGE  
THERAPY PRACTICE

## Teaching Language Skills Through Play: Puzzles

**In order to promote language development and successful play skills you need to incorporate the following when engaging in play with your child:**

- Model language and appropriate play for your child to copy.
- Join your child at play. Your child is more likely to respond if you are engaging with a toy / activity that they are interested in.
- Comment on what you and your child are doing. Your comments should be short and focused on their play.

**Below are some ideas you can use when you are completing puzzles with your child. Pick a couple of ideas that you feel comfortable with and give them a go!**

- Find puzzles that match your child's interests and are of varying sizes (e.g. 4 pieces, 12 pieces, and 24 pieces).
- Before you start, look at the complete puzzle or puzzle box together and talk about what you see. You can name the items ("Look, it's a little puppy"), describe what is happening ("The puppy is chasing the cat") and provide descriptive language ("That looks like a fluffy cat").
- As you place the puzzle pieces on the floor, count them together. Once you have finished counting, re-iterate for your child ("We have 12 puzzle pieces").
- When you are completing the puzzle, use language that describes what the pieces look like and where the pieces have to go ("This piece is a corner, we need to put it the corner" "Lets try this piece up the top").
- If your child's attention starts to wane, put together all of the outside pieces and encourage your child to finish off the middle of the puzzle.
- If you are using a wooden puzzle for young children where you place different pieces into a specific slot, name the pieces as you go and wherever possible make the associated sounds that go with those pieces (e.g. 'meow' for the cat, 'wee ooh wee ooh' for the fire engine).

- Puzzles targeted towards younger children are typically theme based (e.g. farm animals, zoo animals, toys, musical instruments, vehicles, shapes, alphabet etc.). After completing one of these puzzles try to expand upon the theme by picking another activity targeting the same theme (e.g. if you just finished a transport puzzle, sing “The Wheels on the Bus” song with your child).
- If the puzzle pieces or scene relates to something that you and your child have recently done or experienced, talk about this (“Remember when we went to the zoo with Kindergarten?”).

Check out the other Speak To Me “Teaching Language Skills Through Play” worksheets for more ideas to try at home.