

# Activities for Supporting Oral Language Development: Level II

## Activity One: Using Books, Puppets & Stuffed Animals

Many children who are reluctant to speak will do so if they are allowed to “talk behind” a puppet or stuffed animal. Through this activity, children will:

- Be encouraged to participate in a small group activity that involves speaking in front of other children.
- Have an opportunity to use “book language”.
- Gain confidence in speaking in front of others.
- Practice speaking clearly and loudly enough for others to hear.

**Directions:** Locate a book with animal characters that repeat certain phrases or sentences. Find or make stuffed animals or puppets to represent the animals in the book.

1. Show the children the cover and ask if they know what kind of animal is shown.
2. If they don't know, tell them: “This is a book about a polar bear.”
3. Ask children to suggest what the animal might do in the book. (Accept all responses.)
4. Read the title of the book and tell the children who wrote the book (the author) and who made the pictures (illustrator).
5. Read the book, pausing often, for the children to make comments.
6. Ask the children to suggest what might happen next, or to tell why a particular character did something. Again, accept all responses (ie. “You think the cricket will try to say, ‘hello’, to that insect, too.”
7. Invite the children to make or select a puppet character from the story.
8. Reread the story, inviting the children to join in reciting the repetitive parts as they hold their puppet or stuffed animal.
9. Leave the puppets and story in a convenient location for children to enjoy this activity again without your involvement.

## Activity Two: “Let’s Pretend”

Almost every kind of pretending gives children a chance for speaking and listening.

Dramatic play helps:

- Provide opportunities for children to use language for real world purposes.
- Promote use of words that children may not normally use.
- Shy children feel more comfortable speaking because they are pretending to be someone other than themselves.
- Children develop interpersonal and social skills.

**Directions: Provide lots of time for children to become very involved in pretend play. Listed below are some ideas for helping children get involved in pretend play.**

1. Provide items children can use for “dress-up” such as: old clothes, Halloween costumes—particularly ones that portray story characters like Snow White, Cinderella, Robin Hood, etc., scarves, large fabric scraps, plastic hats, masks, shoes, purses, jewelry, and so forth.
2. Provide real life props for children to use in their play. For example, empty food containers for the play grocery store, as well as coupons, grocery sacks, grocery store advertisements from the newspaper, toy cash register, play money, purses, wallets, and toy grocery cart.
3. Look for opportunities to prompt dramatic play. For example, if a group of children are building a car from the large blocks, you might say “Oh, will you be taking your car to the mechanic to have it repaired?” or “Will you be taking your car to the service station for gas? Air in the tires? Etc.”
4. Support children’s need for props for dramatic play. Children may need something to use for the gas station. Perhaps a chair with a jump rope or long scarf tied to it would work for the gas pump. The classroom restaurant may need samples of menus and placemats from a local fast food restaurant.
5. Enrich children’s language by joining in their dramatic play for a brief time. Use new words associated with their play. For example, a teacher joining a group of children who are playing in the grocery store might use the words “coupons,” “change,” “charge,” “cost,” “advertisement,” “produce,” and “aisle.”

## Activity Three: Who's In The Picture?

Children love to look at photographs of themselves...and sharing photographs with others provides a natural opportunity for speaking! Using photographs in the preschool classroom will:

- Help children to feel good about themselves.
- Give children something very familiar to talk about with others.
- Provide an opportunity for linking oral and written language.

**Directions: Collect an assortment of photographs of the children. These can be used in many ways, including:**

1. Display photographs on a large bulletin board placed at the eye level of the children. Be sure to point out when you have added new pictures to the bulletin board, and invite children to show pictures of themselves, or to describe various photographs to parents and visitors.
2. Compile photographs into a class photograph album. Ask children to dictate a sentence telling them about each picture. Write these sentences under or beside each photograph in the album. Store the album in a conspicuous place—within easy reach of the children. Be sure to point out when new photographs are added, and invite children to talk about photographs in the album with parents and visitors.
3. Make duplicate copies of photographs and use for matching games. Have children find the two that look exactly alike. When possible, have duplicates of several similar shots to promote conversation between children about which pictures are exactly the same.
4. Make classification games by placing two or three types of photographs together in one container for children to sort. For example, children can look at the pictures and discuss which ones belong in the category for “pictures taken outdoors” and which ones belong in the category for “pictures taken indoors.” Other categories might include pictures showing special celebrations, field trips, pictures of boys and girls, pictures of adults and children, pictures of children in costumes and not in costumes, and so forth.
5. Invite children to make individual photograph albums, with sentences they have dictated or written about each picture in their album.

## Activity Four: Speech Bubbles

Making speech bubbles is an excellent way to encourage children's speech. Use of word bubbles helps:

- Children see that their spoken language can be written down and read by others.
- Children feel that their words are valued by others.
- Motivate children to talk.

**Directions: Draw “bubbles” on plain white paper. Make each bubble large enough to write, using large manuscript print. Keep a supply of these on hand for convenient use throughout the year.**

1. Attach speech bubbles to photographs and self-portraits of the children. Ask the children to tell you what they want to say to others who look at their picture.
2. Attach speech bubbles to other pictures in the room and on hallway displays. Ask children to tell you what the characters in the pictures may be saying. Write the children's sentences in the speech bubbles. For example, a bulletin board with a variety of animal cut-outs or drawings made by the children may have speech bubbles for each animal to tell what he/she is. (ie. “Hello! I’m a parrot! Polly want a cracker?”)