



Three Ways Foster to Language Development Over Summer Break

School is out and summer is in. This means beaches, ice cream, playgrounds, trips to the library, and plenty of time for family fun! These family outings are one of the most exciting parts of summer as they provide children with opportunities to create memories, gain new experiences, engage in hands-on learning activities, and bond with family.

However, summertime also means that in-school Speech Therapy is over. Over the course of a summer break, children who receive school based Speech Therapy are missing out on 10-12 weeks of therapy. Some parents may be concerned about their child's time away from school-based services and what is known as the "summer slide," or the loss of academic knowledge and skills that some kids can experience given extended breaks from the classroom and therapeutic services. Have no fear! There are plenty of ways to hold on to the exciting summer feelings while simultaneously reducing your child's risk of experiencing this "summer slide." Here are three ways to support your child's communication development during the summer months while spending some quality time with your family.

1. Hit the road:

Taking a day trip is a fantastic way to stimulate your child's communication development. For families in the bay area, the opportunities for kid-friendly day trips are innumerable! Before getting in the car, bus or train, you can stimulate your child's problem solving, negotiating, and executive functioning skills by debating the pros and

cons of several possible activities and deciding on where to go as a family. This provides your child the opportunity to learn about compromise and flexible thinking. Once in the car, it's time to play road trip games, such as '20 Questions', 'Would You Rather', or 'I Spy'. These games support your child's vocabulary development, listening comprehension, attention, and turn-taking skills. After the trip, you can support your child's narrative and descriptive language skills by having them retell the highlights of the trip using a journal or scrapbook.

2. Get cooking:

Inviting your child into the kitchen with you fosters their communication skills, sensory development, and feeding skills! You can address executive functioning skills by having your child create a shopping list, go shopping with you, and help prepare the work space. Reading and following a recipe together provides your child an opportunity to practice sequencing tasks and following progressively complex directions. After you are done cooking, you can model and encourage your child to use their descriptive vocabulary (e.g., it looks *smooth*, it tastes *sweet* and *delicious*) and model narrative language structures by retelling the events (e.g., *first* we cut the watermelon, *then* we put it on the stick, *finally* we ate it).

3. Take a hike:

Out in nature, we can let our imaginations run free and get all of our senses involved in the learning process. You can support your child's communication development while "walking and talking" by hitting the trails and pointing out and naming all of the amazing things you see on the way! Model specific words, including **novel** or **more complex words** such as *branch*, and *horizon*, to stay one step ahead of your child's vocabulary development.

It is not just about **what** you do, but also **how** you do it. Remember to model positive language and develop your child's critical thinking by asking and answering open-ended questions and allowing them to explore the world through hands-on experiences.

If you are concerned about your child's speech and language skills, in-home Speech and Language Therapy or private Speech and Language Therapy are options to help maintain and continue to improve communication skills.