

Verbal Routines



Children learn through repetition. Often, the words they learn first are the ones they hear over and over again. One way to help your child learn new words and use phrases is through repetition. You can do this by establishing “verbal routines”.

A verbal routine is a word or phrase that is repeated throughout an activity at a predictable time. The frequency and predictability of the routine may allow your child to participate with more ease. Try establishing verbal routines in the following activities:

1. Books

Many books already have repeated phrases built right in. After you have read a book several times, pause before or during this phrase (depending on your child’s language level). Wait to see if they will “fill in the blank” (i.e., a single word or several words). Some great books include:

Author	Title	Repeated Phrase
Eric Carle	<u>What’s For Lunch</u> <u>Brown Bear, Brown Bear</u>	“No thank you.” “What do you see?” “... looking at me.”
	<u>From Head To Toe</u>	“Can you do it?” “I can do it!”
Rod Cambell	<u>Dear Zoo</u>	“I sent him back.”
Harriet Ziefert	<u>Here Comes A Bus</u>	“Here comes a bus!” “Is this the bus for us?”
	<u>Who Said Moo?</u>	“Did you say moo?”
Susan Winter	<u>I Can</u>	“She can’t.”

Rhythm and rhyme in books can also create verbal routines. Children respond well to these kinds of books and can learn to “fill in the blank” even without a repeated phrase. Try these great rhyming books and pause towards the end of a line:

Author	Title
Sandra Boynton	<u>Moo, Baa, La La La</u>
	<u>Hey, Wake Up!</u>
	<u>Oh My, Oh My, Oh Dinosaurs</u>
	<u>Night-Night Little Pookie</u>
Dr. Seuss	<u>Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?</u>
	<u>Hop On Pop</u>
	<u>ABCs</u>
	<u>One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish</u>
Dennis Lee	<u>Alligator Pie</u>
	<u>Ice Cream Store</u>
	<u>Garbage Delight</u>

2. Songs, Nursery Rhymes, Finger Plays

Songs, nursery rhymes and finger plays include repetition, predictability and rhythm. The key to helping your child “fill in the blank” is to do these activities often (for familiarity) and to *do them slowly*. Slow down enough so that it feels awkward for you. Just like with books, pause at the end of a line to allow your child to fill in a word or phrase:

Songs

Adult: “Twinkle, twinkle little star. How I wonder what...” Child: “You are!”

Adult: “Old McDonald had a farm. E-I-E-I...” Child: “O!”

Nursery Rhymes

Adult: “Hickory dickory dock. The mouse went up the...” Child: “Clock!”

Adult: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a...” Child: “Great fall!”

Finger Plays

Adult: “Five little monkeys jumping on the bed. One fell off and...” Child: “Bumped his head!”

Adult: “Round and round the garden, like a...” Child: “Teddy bear!”

3. Toys and Games

Unlike books and songs, play time does not come with pre-determined words. Here, you must create your own verbal routines. Watch the way your child is playing and add words or phrases to be repeated several times throughout the activity. Try adding words:

Before an action – “1, 2, 3, go”, “Ready, set, go”, “Gonna get you”, “Look mommy”

After an action – “I did it”, “All done”, “My turn”, “Do it again”, “Here you go”

Use your target phrase each time. Remember to pause and allow your child to complete part of the phrase.

4. Daily Routines

Add predictable language to your child’s daily routines (i.e., dressing, meal/snack time, bath time, bed time). Some families already have some verbal routines, such as blessings or prayers. Think about repeated phrases that could be added to your daily activities.

Ideas could include:

Dressing – “Put your shirt on now. Put your pants on now. Put your socks on now...”

Meal time – “Cup goes on the table. Plate goes on the table. Fork goes on the table...”

Bath time – “Wash your face. Now it’s clean! Wash your tummy. Now it’s clean...”

Bed time – “Good night teddy, time for bed. Good night blanket, time for bed...”

REMEMBER – you must pause and wait for your child to fill in the blank