

Stimulating Language and Reducing Children's Screen Time



Multilingual Families Lab conducted a survey on children's communication during COVID-19. 201 Anglophone, Francophone and Hispanophone families answered our questionnaire and have shared what would be useful for their children. Thanks for your participation! Here are the results of the survey. We hope this material is helpful!



1. Stimulating language in younger children

Many parents are concerned about their children's language use and how to best communicate with them during this time. Here are a few tips to stimulate young children's language skills.

- Use everyday activities as an opportunity to stimulate language with your children. For example: describe, name and interact while preparing a meal; sing songs, read books or tell stories with your child; play board games as a family.
- Keep the following tips in mind to stimulate language:
 - Explain your actions as you do them or explain what your child is doing.
 - Describe what your child is seeing. "You are looking through the window. You can see trees, a sidewalk, and a red car."
 - Rephrase what your child has said without correcting them. You can model their phrases with a correct sentence. You can also add extra information that your child has not mentioned to this sentence. Child: "A ball!". You: "Yes, I see a big ball."

For more information:
<https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/activities-to-Encourage-speech-and-Language-Development/>



2. Stimulating language in older children

Here are a few tips to stimulate older children's language skills.

- Read books to them everyday. Interact with them by explaining and then questioning, according to your child's level and development: how books work, the meaning of different words, the letters of the alphabet, the sound the different letters make, separating the words in syllables, deciding if two words rhyme or not, predicting the next action in the story, inferring how the character feels, etc.

For more information:
<https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/Getting-Your-Child-Ready-Reading-and-Writing.pdf>

- For children who can read, encourage them to read according to their interests.
- Word games are great to help them continue developing their language skills such as Hedbanz, Taboo, 5-second rule Jr. You may adjust and increase the time limits according to your child's needs.

For a list:
<https://www.wiseoldowlslit.com/article/10-games-to-encourage-language-development-in-older-children>



3. Ways to reduce screen time

Many parents also are concerned with the increased screen time. Here are some tips about using screens.

- Observe your children's behaviour to see how screen time is affecting them. Use a monitoring application or parental control.
- Create technology-free areas in the home such as dining room or bedroom and set a schedule during which screen use is permitted.
- Explain to your children the risks related to excessive screen use and ask them to justify why they need to use a screen.
- Make a binge day when they are able to use the screen as much as they want.
- Encourage them to do other activities and provide them with the necessary material.

For a list of monitoring apps:
<https://www.parents.com/kids/safety/internet/best-apps-for-parents-to-monitor-and-limit-screen-time/>

Do not forget that we are experiencing exceptional and challenging times, so if you or a member of your family needs help, do not hesitate to seek professional advice

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<https://bilingualacquisition.ca/>

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Infographic created by
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Multilingual Families
Laboratory*, & MacLeod