

Under the Table or In a Fort!

Tell your child that you are going on an adventure under the table or to a fort, but you will need to bring some things with you. Decide together what toys you'd like to bring. Put all your items in a box. Talk about the things you are placing in the box. Work on positional concepts (in, on, under, over, next to, near, far, etc.) plurals, following directions, and naming items. "I want to bring some CARS. Let's put them IN the box. Find something RED to bring with us.

Items you will need for this activity:

- Blanket
- Table
- Flashlight
- Box
- Toys

Throw the blanket over the table. This is a perfect opportunity to discuss positional concepts such as OVER and UNDER. "We will put this blanket OVER the table, then we can sit UNDER the table and have some fun."

Grab your box of toys and go under the table. Now you are ready to play and build new language skills with your child. As with any activity, make it fun and don't be afraid to be a little silly. Who would've thought you could have so much fun under a table?! (Activity adapted from <http://www.playingwithwords365.com/building-speech-language-skills-under-the-table/>)

Some ideas include but are not limited to:

- Discuss the flashlight (giving directions, where do you find one, what is it used for, how will you play with it for this game, etc). "The flashlight is OFF. Help me turn it ON."
- Use play food and have a picnic. Work on naming and sorting food, positional concepts (on/off the plate), plurals ("I'd like some chips"), pronouns, verbs ("I am eating an apple. You are eating a banana"), possessives ("This is my fork. That is your spoon").

- Play with cars or trucks - use adjectives while playing. “This car is fast” or “that truck is old and rusty” This would be great for positional concepts (“I’m driving my car OUT and back IN”) or WH questions. (“Where is the car going?”, “Why is it broken?”)
- Practice inviting others (siblings or other parent): Take turns entering and exiting, practice introductions, and social skills. You and your child can practice polite ways to greet others, asking to join an activity, manners, and appropriately leaving an activity.
- Tell a story: Since everything is more fun when you’re under a table, even something as simple as reading or telling a story together can be more exciting!

Before you begin, take a moment to consider the environment and what will work best for your child based on their specific hearing needs.

Is hearing assistive technology (hearing aids, cochlear implant, SoftBand hearing aid, Bone Anchored Hearing Aid, Mini-Mic, Roger technology) being worn and working properly?

Does your child need to see your face while communicating? Try to create an optimal listening environment. Sit or stand where your child has access to your face, sounds, and signs.

Where possible, reduce background noise and distractions (dishwasher running, a room fan, the television on, etc.).

Tips:Pick one or a few of these tips to focus on each time you play.**

-Encourage communication by talking or signing (or use both) while you do an activity. Communicate about sizes, shapes, and colors you see while doing these activities.

-Point out and label objects, where you find them, how they grow, or what happens next.

-Discuss feelings, order of events, smells, and/or who will be involved.

- Narrate what you are doing while you are doing an activity
- Practice turn taking, making requests, and eye contact. Watch for anticipation from your child and practice waiting for your child to make requests.
- Promote problem solving and critical thinking skills. Let them practice asking for help, or trying to problem solve on their own.
- Reinforce numeracy by counting or counting backwards.
- Introduce time markers (yesterday, today, tomorrow, before, after, etc.)
- Practice WH questions. (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- Play with vocal inflections, sound effects, music, or rhythms.

Repetition is key to building language - so have fun playing this everyday activity many times this month!