



Chapter 9

Learning to use a spoken language

Children who can hear the differences between many words or who became deaf after they learned to speak may be able to use a spoken language.

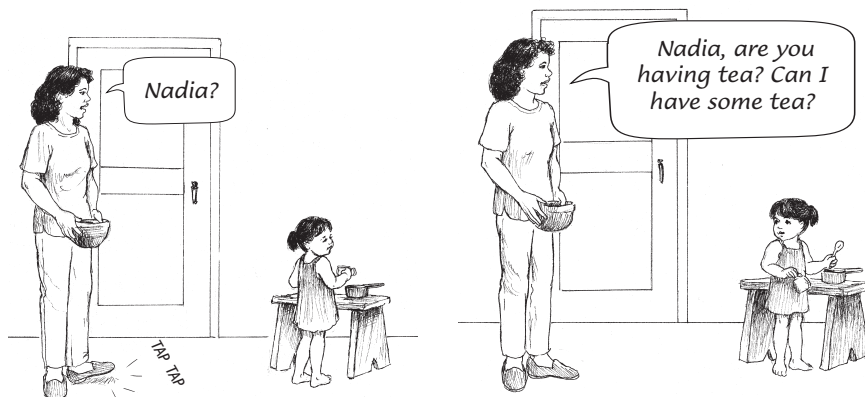
Most deaf children talk differently from children who can hear. People who do not know a particular deaf child well often have difficulty understanding her speech. If you use a spoken language with your child, she will need extra help as she learns to read lips and speak clearly. You will get better results if you and your child enjoy learning words and language together. Remember, everyone in the home will have to talk to your child as much as possible.

First, a child will begin to understand words that other people use. Then your child will begin to use words for people and things she sees every day that are important to her. Later she will learn many different kinds of words. This will help your child learn to speak in sentences. See Chapter 3 for guidelines on how to teach your child language.

► **How to get your child's attention**

Your child needs to see your lips move to be able to understand your words. Be sure she is looking at you when you talk to her.

If your child responds to her name, use it to get her attention. If she does not respond, try tapping the floor with your foot, so she feels the vibration.



► **Ways to keep your child's interest**

- Talk about things she knows and can see: her food, her clothing, her toys.
- Talk about things that interest her. If she likes trucks, talk about them. If she likes to play with dolls, talk about what she is doing.
- Talk often, not just at teaching times. Your child may not yet understand the words, but it will help her become more aware of language.
- Try to reduce the noise around you. Remember to speak close to the child. If her hearing in one ear is better, remember to speak near that ear.



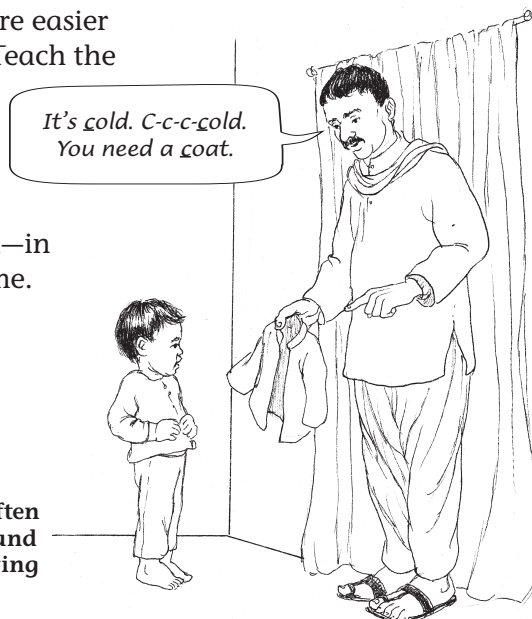
Face your child when you are talking, and be in good light so she can see your face.

► **How to help your child learn speech sounds**

Simply speaking to a child who can hear is enough for him to be able to learn to speak. But to help a child who cannot hear well learn to speak, he needs to listen to and remember the distinct speech sounds that make up words. So in addition to talking naturally to your child, you should have your child listen to and use specific speech sounds.

Every language has sounds that are easier and harder for children to learn. Teach the simpler sounds first (like “ma” before “ra”).

Every 2 weeks, choose a different distinct speech sound and use it as often as you can—in conversation, by itself, or as a game. Ask other people to use the same speech sound too.



Repeat the chosen sound as often as you can. Use the speech sound alone too, for example, by saying “c-c-c cold.”

► How to help your child learn his first words

Your child will have to learn to watch your lips and listen very carefully. So it is best to teach only a few words at a time.

Watch your own lips in a mirror, or watch other people's lips when they talk, to see what kinds of sounds can be seen on your lips. Sometimes different sounds look the same on the lips. You will soon see how hard it can be to read lips.



The words "baby," "maybe," and "pay me" all look the same on the lips.

To help a child learn a word:

1. Choose a few words that are easy to see on the lips. Some sounds are easier to see than others. Sounds like "b" where the lips start to close and then open are the easiest to see.

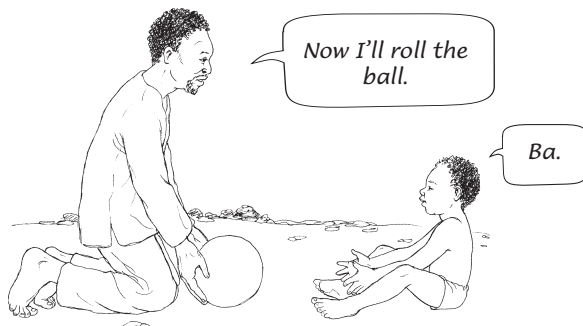
2. Choose words that are easy to hear. Some sounds are louder than others. Some of the loudest sounds are "ah" like in "mama" or "papa," "oo" like in "book" and "ee" like in "street."

These are good words to begin with.



3. It is easiest to hear a word if it is at the beginning or end of a sentence.

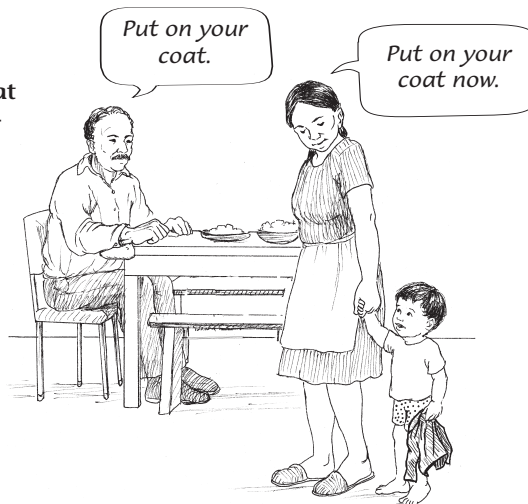
4. To teach words, you will have to use them hundreds of times. So choose words that can be used in conversation many times every day.



5. Use the same words over and over in the same situations. Repeating them is necessary, and young children like it.
6. Speak clearly. Use careful, but not exaggerated, lip movements.
7. Make a short list of useful words you want your child to learn, and ask everyone in the family to use them often. Choose words that are easy to see on the lips.

Everybody should use the same word for anything that can have different names—like “coat” or “jacket.”

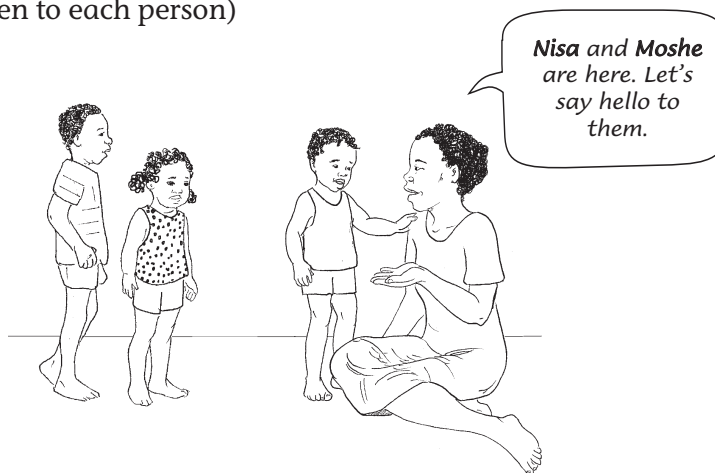
When you are sure your child understands the words you have been using, teach more words that look and sound very different from the first few words. As you teach your child the new words, continue to practice the old words.



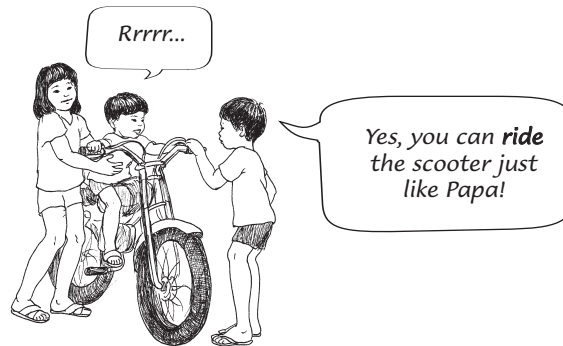
YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO KNOW DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORDS

In addition to learning the names of objects and people, your child needs to learn many other kinds of words. This will help your child learn more about the world around her and help prepare her to speak in sentences later on. Be sure to practice all of the following:

- **proper names**
(the name given to each person)



• **action** words



• **describing** words



• **feeling** words



Knowing “**name** words,” “**action** words,” “**describing** words,” and “**feeling** words” helps a child to use those words to think about the world around her.

When children know the meanings of words, they can learn to compare, sort and order things, solve problems, and describe feelings. See Chapter 7 for more information on how children develop their language and thinking.

► **How to encourage your child to begin using words**

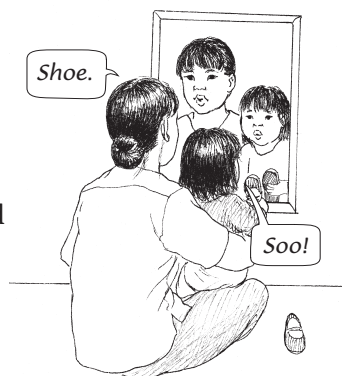
If your child has difficulty hearing speech sounds, he can learn to watch your lips to give him clues about how to say these words himself. It is important to remember, though, that many sounds look the same on the lips.

1. Encourage children to use words when playing. Sit in front of the child in good light and show him something that interests him, like a favorite toy. Encourage him to watch your lips move as you say the name of the toy. Repeat the same word several times.
2. Have the child try to copy you.



Be sure to speak clearly and in a natural way. This will help your child read the lips of other people saying the same thing.

3. Sit with the child in front of a mirror, so she can see both of your faces. Show her an object. Say the name of the object, and then have her copy you.
4. Repeat these steps with different words, especially ones that name things your child is interested in at the moment.

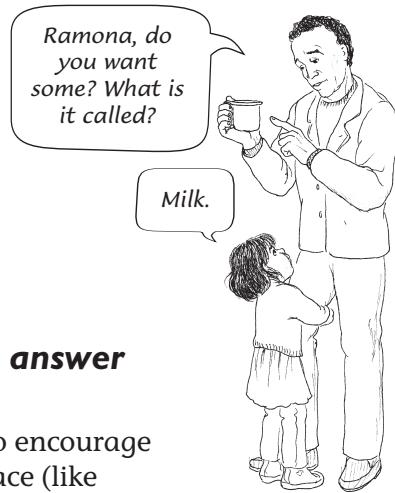


Your child is not going to say words exactly right. Remember, she cannot hear exactly how the words are supposed to sound. At first, you may not even be able to understand what word she is saying. But praise her for trying, and do not be too anxious about having your child say words clearly.

► **Encourage your child to communicate simple needs**

When your child wants something, she is more eager to learn a word that will help her get what she wants.

- Whenever your child seems to want something, encourage her to ask for what she wants using words.



► **How to encourage your child to answer simple questions**

Asking your child questions is a good way to encourage her to talk. Remember to use looks on the face (like raising your eyebrows and looking puzzled) and body movements (like tilting your head) to help your child know you are asking a question.

- To begin, try asking questions that require a “yes” or “no” answer. When your child shakes her head “yes” or “no,” remind her to use the word that sends the same message.



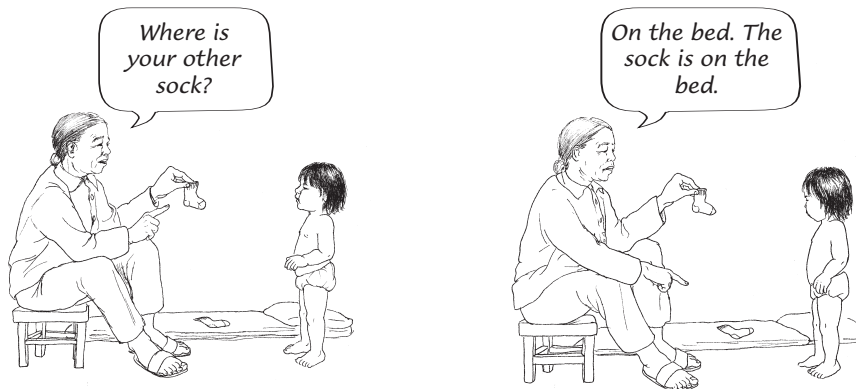
- Ask questions that can be answered with a single word.



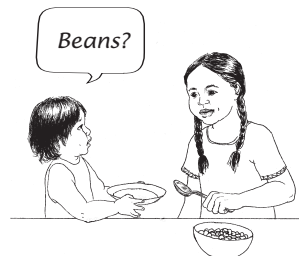
If your child answers, praise him. If your child does not answer:

- he may not understand the words you are using.
- he may not understand that a question needs an answer.

You can teach your child about questions by answering them for her at first. After a while she will get the idea.

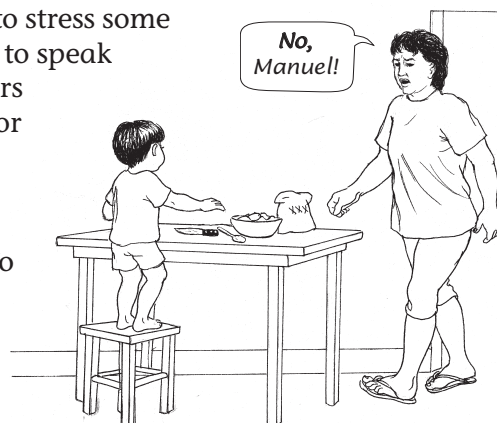


- Create situations that need your child to ask for something. Here, Ana's sister gave her an empty bowl and waited for her to ask for beans.



► **Help your child pay attention to how words are said**

Whenever people speak, they tend to stress some words more than others (loudness), to speak some words more quickly than others (rhythm), and to change how high or deep their voices are (pitch). People also show what they are feeling by their tone of voice. These different ways of speaking all add meaning to the message being sent.



Listening to the tone in his mother's voice and her stress on the word "no" helps Manuel know what she means.

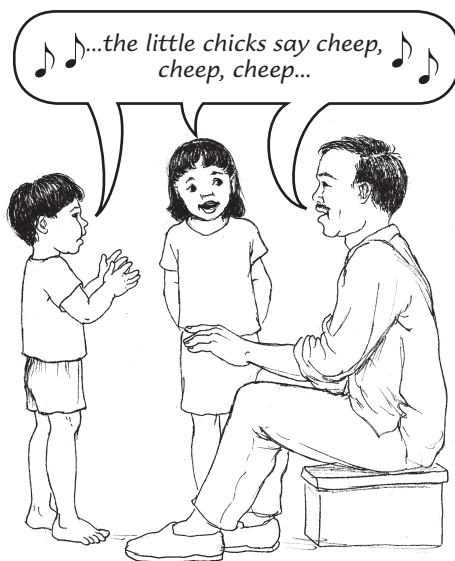
► **How to help your child say things in different ways**

Just as your child learns to listen and watch for the different ways things are said, he needs to learn to speak in different ways.

- Play games that encourage your child to speak with feeling.



- Encourage your child to sing. This will help his voice go up and down, and help change the rhythm of his speech.



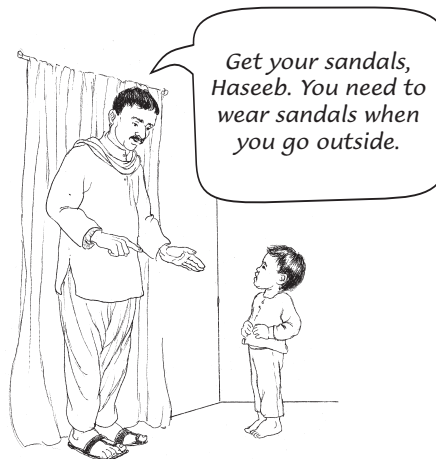
► **How to help your child follow simple requests**

As your child learns to recognize the names of objects, people, and activities, he can begin to understand simple requests you make. Begin with short requests. Emphasize the words he already knows, and use gestures to make the message more clear. Be sure to give your child enough time to respond. Repeat the request if necessary.

At first, make requests about objects or people he can see around him.



Then make requests about objects or people he cannot see.



► **Ways to encourage your child to learn more words**

The best way to help your child learn more words is to communicate with her as much as you can—and to encourage her to speak to you. Here are a few ideas for communicating often throughout the day:

- Everyday activities are a good time to learn new words. This gives a child a chance to practice the same words over and over.



- Make a mistake to encourage her to correct you.



- Leave out a word in a song or nursery rhyme your child has heard often. Encourage him to say the missing word.



After using single words, a child begins to put words together to express complete thoughts. At first he puts 2 words together. Then he begins to use 3 words—and finally, bigger groups of words.

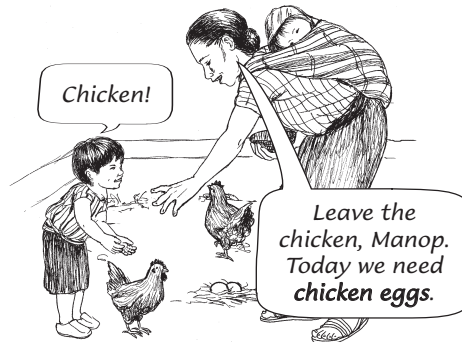
Putting groups of words together is a big step for a child. It allows him to say more about the objects and people around him. He must first learn to understand how other people do this before he begins to do it himself.

Understanding groups of words used by others

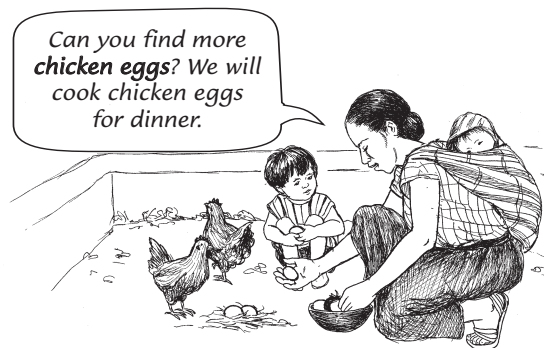
► How to help your child understand groups of words

1. When your child names an object or person, expand on what he says.

Stress the group of words you want your child to learn and repeat the group several times.



2. Praise your child if he responds in any way that shows he understood. If he does not respond, repeat the words several times.



3. Use these words as much as you can throughout the day. Encourage the whole family to use them, too.



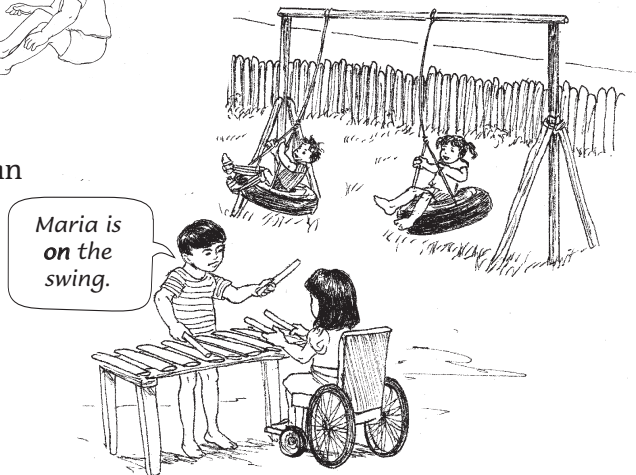
In this example, the parents put together the name of an object (eggs) with a word that describes it (chicken). Using a group of words in a full sentence can help focus a child's attention on the words.

To teach your child other groups of words, try putting the name of an object or person together with:

- a word that shows what a person or thing does.
- a word that shows who or what an object belongs to.



- a word that shows where an object or person is.



- a word that shows someone wants something to happen again.



- a word that shows something is over, or that something cannot be done.



► **How to help your child follow 2-step requests**

When your child understands more words, he can begin to follow more difficult requests. You can begin by expanding the simple requests your child already understands by turning them into requests that have 2 steps. Then slowly make the requests more difficult.



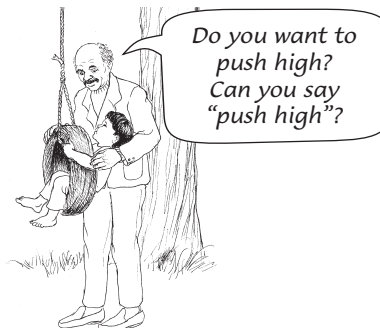
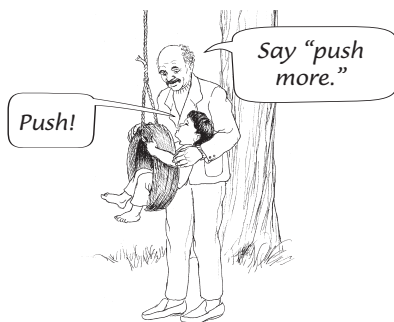
Learning to use groups of words

For a child to begin using groups of words by himself, he needs to know several words so he can put them together in different ways.

► **Ways to encourage your child to put words together**

When your child says a single word, encourage him to expand on what he says. You could:

- expand on the words yourself and encourage him to copy you.
- ask a question and encourage him to answer.



Here are some more ideas for encouraging your child to use groups of words:

- Ask your child about what she is doing.
- When your child has a problem, ask him to tell you how to solve it.

*That **smells good!** What is in the pot?*



Heavy.



*The basket is **too heavy?** What should we do?*

- Ask your child to deliver a simple message.

Tell Papa, "come eat."



- Try telling stories together. When your child has heard and seen a story many times, she may be able to tell part of it herself.

...and then the farmer...

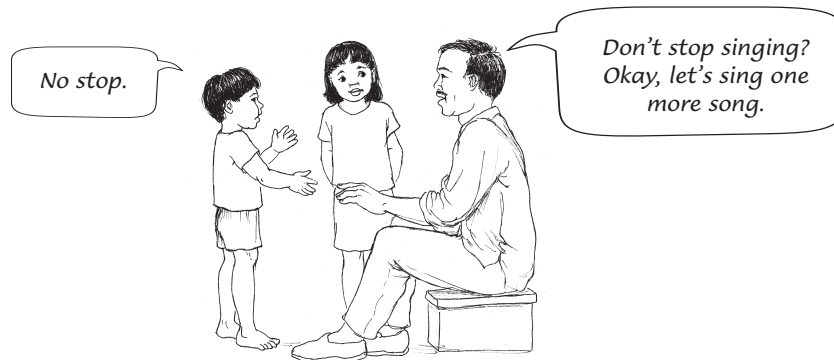
...fell in the river!



- Encourage your child to act out different roles.



- Praise him when he puts words together. By using complete sentences, expand on what he says. Talk to him in complete sentences. But do not expect him to use complete sentences yet.



- Share the ideas or feelings you are thinking about as you play together.



Keep practicing the spoken language. Remember, it is important for your child to have a language that all of you can share.