



Imitating and Expanding

Young children enjoy it when you *imitate* what they have said back to them. It confirms that you are really listening and want to have a conversation with them.

When you imitate your child, you repeat what he or she has said and you say it using the adult speech sounds and words.

Imitating is a helpful way to model speech for children who are using one and two words together, but who are still difficult to understand. It highlights the sounds of speech for them. This is done in a casual and social way so that the conversation is not disrupted and the child does not feel as if he/she has been corrected.

Imitating your child's one and two-word utterances back to them confirms the child's message, maintains the flow of conversation, and provides an immediate model of the correct speech sounds.

You can also *expand* what your child has said.

To expand you use the words your child has said and add one or two words to make the phrase or sentence more complete.

Here are some examples:

- Child says... "hands" (while washing his/her hands)
- You say... "wash hands" or "washing hands"

- Child says... "wash hands" (while washing his/her hands)
- You say... "You're washing your hands"

A speech-language pathologist will be able to give you information about these two techniques and other strategies to help build your child's language.