

SMART Practice: Let's Make it a Habit

Objective: To increase a parent's competency in utilizing communicative exchanges for meaningful language development

Importance: Critical skill for family members to grasp as families are the primary communicators with a child.

Today's families tend to be "on the go." Traveling to and from soccer practice for an older child, attending a swim meet, or making a trip to the grocery store, provide some of the BEST opportunities for learning language. What often appears to be an activity not structured for language learning, can be an IDEAL avenue for language learning.

In order to increase time spent actively engaged in language learning, we need to establish SMART language learning practice habits.

SMART learning habits include:

- Practicing active listening habits during all waking hours. Do model good listening skills. Do look at your child when he or she is talking. Don't let young children talk simultaneously, talking OVER a parent or OVER a sibling. BAD practice leads to BAD HABITS. Young children can not attend when a competing conversation exists. Turn off the tv or the radio for language learning and listening.
- Listen and extend your child's communicative statements. SMART practice habits mean developing the skill to extend your child's thinking. Your child says, "a penguin." Extend by adding, "a penguin waddles." Most young children will immediately want to show you how a penguin waddles. Here is another opportunity for SMART practice and another

extension."Oh, I know how to waddle like a penguin. Do you?" Another opportunity, "can you waddle all the way to the FRONT door?" EXTEND EXTEND EXTEND!!!

- Use daily routines and trips in the car as opportunities to include SMART practice of skills learned. Basic concepts can be taught through trips in the car:

BASIC Spatial Concepts:

Where are we going first? Where are we going next? Where will we go last?

Who are you sitting next to in the car? Who is in front of you? Who is behind you?

Look out the window and find a red car in front of us.

What do you see up in the sky?

What's underneath your car seat?

BASIC Qualitative Concepts:

This road is bumpy. Can you feel the car go bump bump bump?

It's too hot in the car, turn down the heat.

It's too cold in the car, turn up the heat.

Can you find something smooth on your car seat?

This car is so dirty we have to drive through the car wash.

CAUSE and EFFECT

BASIC Quantitative Concepts:

Can you count all of the mirrors that you can see?

Can you count all of the car windows? Should we count the windshield? Why or Why not?

How many wipers do we have on our car? Does daddy's car have the same number of wipers or a different number of wipers?

BASIC Temporal Concepts:

Soon we'll be at grandma's house.

Later we'll stop at Target.
Now I can't find my keys!
I already put gas in the car so we can go!
Tomorrow we'll drop the books off at the library.



Use **Singing** to capture your child's attention. Children love to listen to the rhythm of language. Melodic contours in spoken language heighten and hold the attention of young children.

SMART practice incorporates daily singing and rehearsal of children's well known nursery rhymes.

While in the car...sing about the car! "The wipers on our car go swoosh, swoosh, swoosh." Take the rhythm and melody from a children's song such as "This is the way we _____" and change it to reflect the activity of the moment.

More SMART practice..... At the grocery store chant, "First we're gonna get the meat, get the meat, get the meat. First we're gonna get the meat, then we're gonna eat at home!" Next we're gonna get the potatoes, get the potatoes, get the potatoes, Next we're gonna get the potatoes, then we're gonna eat!! Last we're gonna pay for our food, pay for our food, pay for our food. Last we're gonna pay for our food, then we're gonna eat!" This organization of thought, use of connecting words, and sequential steps will lead to better writing skills in your child.

Sort laundry the same way.... This is the way we sort our clothes, sort our clothes, sort our clothes. This is the way we sort our clothes before they go in the machine!

Use times where your child has to wait for an appointment as a time for more SMART PRACTICE. Quiet waiting can be a great time to capture your child's attention. BE PREPARED for those unscheduled long waits by always having a collection of books handy for reading. Carry the books in a basket in the car so that they are always available. Change the books frequently so that you have new opportunities for SMART PRACTICE.

Listed below are five family events. After reading through each activity, determine what type of SMART PRACTICE you would best be able to incorporate. Give a specific example of how you would apply and use SMART PRACTICE.

1. A sibling's swimming lesson
2. A trip to the dry cleaners to pick up shirts
3. A trip to the post office to pick up a book of stamps
4. Waiting for a dental appointment