



Supporting Children in Conversations in Specific Settings

Engage children in conversations during pretend play.

- ⇒ Ask open-ended questions (questions that don't have one right answer) that require children to expand on their answers. “What might happen if...?” “What would you do if...?” “What do you think we need to play...?”
- ⇒ Initiate talk that explores the motivations for, the reasons for, the emotional responses to, or the results of pretend play. For example, “I see you are taking your baby for a walk. Where are you going?” “Are you going shopping? I wonder who will be at the store to help you.”
- ⇒ Introduce new words to children. For example, during make-believe cooking, bring out a colander and ask, “Do you need a colander to drain the water from your spaghetti?”

Have conversations during snacks and meals.

- ⇒ Sit with the children, rather than scurry about setting the table or bringing food.
- ⇒ Encourage extended conversation. Help children stay on topic, take turns, and listen to each other.
- ⇒ Tie experiences in your family child care home to children's home life.
- ⇒ Allow children to initiate conversation topics. Ask questions and extend descriptions. For example, if a child is talking about her pet dog and says, “dog hungry,” you can ask, “What does your dog like to eat when she's hungry?”
- ⇒ Listen attentively to what children are saying.
- ⇒ Expose children to new words, giving a definition or synonym if needed.
- ⇒ Encourage children to talk about their day. For example, ask, “What did you have the most fun doing this morning?”
- ⇒ Ask lots of questions to support children's storytelling.

Take children on field trips and try the following:

- ⇒ Introduce the field trip to children ahead of time; discuss what they will see and do.
- ⇒ Brainstorm questions with children that they can investigate.
- ⇒ Introduce new words related to the field trip.
- ⇒ Help children revisit and discuss their field trip experience through pretend play.