

The language of young children often does not sound like the language of adults. As children learn language, it is normal for them to speak with grammar that is invented, exploratory, or unconventional. Also, multilingual learners may use sentence structures that make sense in their native language (for example, “the chair blue” instead of “the blue chair”). Don’t stop a conversation to correct children’s grammar; instead, provide a language model and keep the conversation going (for example, “Yes, you are sitting in the blue chair”). This shows children that you value their ideas



TEACHING TIP

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Extend and expand conversations with children by asking open-ended questions.

Instead of asking ...	Ask ...
Are you reading a book?	What are you doing?
What color is the playdough?	What are you doing with the playdough?
Is your hot chocolate hot or cold?	How does your hot chocolate feel when you drink it?
Does Charlie feel mad?	Why does Charlie feel mad?

Table 1.1. Instead of Asking

To help children’s language grow, consider the following strategies:

- 1. Repeat and reword what children say to expose them to advanced language models.

Infant: Blue. (*Eats blueberries.*)
Adult: Blueberries.
Toddler: Sticky.
Adult: That glue is sticky.
Preschooler: I wonned the game.
Adult: Yes, you won the game!

- 2. Expand and extend what children say by adding an idea.

Infant: Ka. (*Touches a cat.*)
Adult: That’s a soft cat.
Toddler: Truck! (*Plays with a toy truck.*)
Adult: Your truck is driving up the hill and down the hill.
Preschooler: It’s sunny today.
Adult: It’s sunny and the temperature is high; it’s going to be very hot today.