

Tip Sheet: Support Language by Expanding Child's Responses

FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

For additional support on this topic, visit <https://bit.ly/QTEExpand> to view a short video.

WHY?

Young children often answer questions with simple, one-word responses. Because they are still developing their oral language skills, they may lack the words and language necessary to express a complete thought. **Expanding** on children's answers shows that you heard them and accept their responses as correct, while modeling how to use more sophisticated language. This language modeling exposes mature language and encourages children to make more complete responses.

WHAT?

When you expand on a child's response, you accept the child's answer as correct and add a little more to make it a complete thought or sentence. Here is an example of a teacher expanding on a child's response:

Teacher: *What is the girl doing?*

Child: *Splashing.*

Teacher: *Yes, she's splashing in the puddle.*

The teacher repeated back what the child said, while adding words to form a complete thought or sentence.

HOW?

When a child answers with one word or a short phrase, take time to repeat what they said, while adding words to make a complete sentence. It is important not to change the main idea of the child's message. Pay attention to the context and where the child is focusing their attention when they speak. This ensures that your expansion captures the child's original purpose of their message.



TEACHER TIP

After expanding children's language, invite them to answer questions again with more complete ideas. If this is still too difficult for some, you support children by responding chorally with them.

For example:

Teacher: *What is the girl doing?*

Child: *Swimming.*

Teacher: *Yes, she's swimming in the pool. So, what is she doing?*

Teacher and child together: *She's swimming in the pool.*