



# Welcome to...

## **WE CAN TALK**

**Tips for enhancing your child's speech and language (continued)**

### **The fourth technique in WE CAN TALK**

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#### **A - Add singing throughout your day. Children love and learn from music.**

Music is a universal language. Have you ever seen children dance and sing to their favorite tune? There is no doubt about the power of music when you witness little children losing themselves in the emotion of song.

The reason for using music to help young children learn is very simple. Children with speech and language delays need something very fundamental. They need PRACTICE. They need repetition and rehearsal daily. Because most children are attentive to music, they are more likely to sing or listen to their favorite songs over and over again. Music is one of the best tools we know to create the practice that kids need.

Children are no different than adults. Have you also heard a song that you absolutely LOVE, and that you keep singing over and over in your head? Have you ever been moved to tears when listening to a song? Do you find yourself moving to music that has a contagious, foot-stomping beat? Just imagine if you could make speech and language practice that contagious and stimulating. Try music.

All children, regardless of ability, can benefit from music and this technique:



**A - Add singing  
throughout your day.  
Children love and learn  
from music.**

**Have you tried singing songs to your child? List some of them.**

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**What types of response do you get from your child when you sing to him? What songs are his favorites?**

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**Write down some of the things that you feel your child may be learning from singing those songs.**

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If you wrote things such as learning new words, learning the alphabet, having fun with others, or doing actions, you are absolutely right. There are many other benefits to using music to enhance your child's communication, including improving imitation of words and gestures, increasing eye contact, increasing interaction with adults and peers, and following directions. When singing with your child, think about what your child is learning and how you can further expand on a song's learning potential.

The songs you choose to sing may depend on your child's interests as well as what speech and language skills your child needs to practice. The important thing to know is that whatever songs you sing, you are directly helping your child learn. If you would like some new song ideas, please go to our website, [www.expresstrain.org](http://www.expresstrain.org) and go to the FREE STUFF page, where you will find lyrics to songs, or go to the OUR PRODUCTS page to see if some of our songs fit your child's needs.

In this fourth technique, we will refer to Kids' Express Train songs frequently and will also give you lyrics to some of our recorded favorites. We are not attempting to convince anyone that our songs are the best. We simply need to explain our techniques with the tools we know best – our songs. If our songs are helpful to you, we are thrilled, but remember that there are other wonderful songs on the market, and many of the best songs are those that are created by YOU – the parents and teachers of children. Here are some new ways to think about music in your child's life.

- **Try songs that encourage your child to interact with you.** Songs that emphasize gross motor movements are especially good for increasing your child's attention and interaction with you. One possible song to try is "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." Do it by sitting on the floor, facing each other while holding hands. On the last line, fall sideways into the "water" and brush off your bodies while saying phrases like, "My hair is wet," "my arms are wet," and "my legs are wet." After each verse, wait and watch your child. If he smiles, you know he wants more. If he gives you his hands, that's an even more obvious cue that he wants to do it again. Sing it again and again. Repetition is crucial to learning, and mutual enjoyment with a song can be used to build higher level communication skills. To continue the song, occasionally request that he attempt to say the word. If he can't, then ask him to

“give you 5” to start the song again. Request something from your child, but make sure it is at the level where he can be successful. If this is a song you do not know, it is recorded in our **KET SET 1**, which is the most basic of our CD sets. You may know the original “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” lyrics, which are perfectly fine to sing as well, but the Kids’ Express Train version of this song, which is printed below, may be a little easier for children to sing:

- **Row Your Boat**

Row, row, row your boat  
Fishie swim.  
Row, row, row your boat  
We fall in.

- **Songs can also be used to increase your child’s gross motor and fine motor imitation skills.** Any song that creates gross motor imitation is great to try. Fine motor movements in finger plays are also excellent. Children are not always able to sing the words to songs, especially while doing the finger movements, but imitation is hugely important regardless of whether it is gross motor, fine motor, or speech imitation. The ultimate goal would be to have your child do the motions of the songs AND sing at the same time. To do this, however, you will probably need to simplify something. You may want to make the lyrics simpler by changing them to vowel sounds or consonant-vowel combinations (singing “nanana” like a rock star is perfectly ok), or it may be the motor tasks you simplify by slapping your hands on your legs. One possible song or rap you could try is “Shake and Wave,” from our **KET SET 3**. We have printed the words below. This song is actually a rhythmic rap that is not sung but spoken. Give your child a scarf as you do this rap together.

- **Shake and Wave**

Shake, shake, shake your scarf. Shake, shake, shake your scarf.  
Shake it in the sky. High, high, high, high, really high  
Shake it down low. Low, low, low, low, really low  
Shake it to the side. Side, side, side, side, side, side  
Shake it on the other side. Side, side STOP!  
(Recite the second verse with “wave your scarf.”)

\* Other excellent songs for motor imitation is “If You’re Happy and You Know It” or our “Monkey Song” from KET Set 1.

- **Speech imitation can be encouraged through songs.** When selecting songs to improve your child’s ability to imitate words and phrases, there is one motto to remember: Sing a simple song that I can simply sing. Your child may do well singing songs with just vowel sounds or consonant-vowel structures such as “nanana” or “bababa” as mentioned above. Any tune will do – just let loose and let the “bababa” and “nanana” fly. Show your child that you like to sing. Or your child may be able to sing songs with single words or words that frequently repeat in chains of 3. Many of our Kids’ Express Train songs incorporate simple phrases and chains of 3. For example, “Puppy, puppy, puppy. Puppy won’t you play with me?” is a song that

encourages imitation of the two-syllable word, “puppy.” There are other children who can sing simple phrases and 2-3-syllable words.

There are literally thousands of songs that can be used to encourage production of phrases and longer words. Certainly Kids’ Express Train songs stress speech imitation, but there are many other artists as well including Raffi, the Wiggles, Steve and Greg, Laurie Berkner, and Gen Jereb who have wonderful songs that emphasize a variety of developmental goals. The important thing is that CDs will never take the place of singing with your child. Our songs and others’ are just tools to get you started, but they are meant to help parents and children engage with each other. Here is an example of a rap that encourages imitation of vowel combinations. This rap is not sung – only spoken to a rhythmic beat.

- **Ride the Horsie – *KET SET 2***

Whoa, whoa, yay, yay. Ride the horsie. Hooray!

Whoa, whoa, yay, yay. Ride the horsie. Hooray!

Ee yah (say it with me) ee yah. Ee yay (your turn) ee yay.

Ee yoe (say it with me) ee yoe. Ride the horsie. Go, go, go.

- **Sing the old classic children’s songs.** Even if your child is unable to sing along with classic children’s songs, sing them anyway. Your child is getting exposed to vocabulary when listening to these songs. Your child can also learn to imitate motor movements. Some of the most common and popular classic children’s songs include: “The ABC song,” “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” “Wheels on the Bus,” “Five Little Monkeys,” “Happy Birthday,” and “Old MacDonald.” When singing these classic tunes, slow down the rate of your singing, encouraging your child to sing along in any way he can. When you sing lines of a song that are repeated often, occasionally stop before singing the last word and see if your child will fill in the blank. Some children respond better to speaking raps as opposed to songs. Beloved nursery rhymes like Humpty Dumpty fit that category. Several of our *KET SET* CDs also contain raps instead of songs for that reason.
- **Make up your own songs about your child’s day.** You may have already done some of your own songwriting. Anytime you break into silly little melodies about your child’s day, you are helping your child learn language. You can make up a song about virtually anything. When you go to the park, drive in the car, go to the store, give your child a bath, tuck your child in at night, or eat together, sing about what you are doing. You can use familiar tunes and add different words to fit the situation. The list of tunes is endless, but some of our favorites include: “Shortnin’ Bread,” “Skip to My Lou,” “Camptown Races,” “Goodnight Ladies,” “Farmer in the Dell,” and “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” When you make up songs and sing them, remember that children don’t care how you sing. They care that you spend time with them. Here are two examples of songs you can sing during a daily routine.
  - **It’s Time to Get Dressed** (Sung to the tune, “Farmer in the Dell”)  
It’s time to get dressed. It’s time to get dressed.  
Shirt, pants, socks, shoes, and all of the rest.

I put on my shirt. I put on my shirt.  
I put it on my head and PULL. I put on my shirt.

(Repeat the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> lines of this song using the words “pants, socks, and shoes” for the remaining verses.)

Pants, I put them on my legs and PULL. I put on my pants.  
Socks, I put them on my feet and PULL. I put on my socks.  
Shoes, I put them on my feet and PULL. I put on my shoes.

### **I Brush My Teeth** (Sung to the tune, “BINGO”)

I brush my teeth in the morning. I brush my teeth at night.  
I brush my teeth with a toothbrush. My teeth are clean and white.  
I go ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, ch,

I brush my teeth from front to back. My mommy helps me, too.  
I won't be scared to brush my teeth. 'Cuz I'll be all done soon.

These are no prize-winning works, but when a child learns words for the first time because of your creation, there is no Grammy Award that can compare.

- **Add visuals to your songs.** When you sing a song with your child, think about how to teach your child what the words mean. Songs that contain lyrics of common objects or action words are great for illustrating or for acting out. Use pictures or the actual objects to relate to lyrics in songs. Our **KET SETS** contain visuals for all of our songs which can be printed out on a computer. We encourage you to do the same with your child's favorite songs as well. One song that you can sing and easily illustrate with pictures or actual objects is our “I Love” song which you can sing to the tune “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” if you don't have the recording from our **KET SET 2**. Here is the first verse.

#### **I Love**

I love bubbles. I love rocks.  
I love blankies. I love socks.  
I love pickles. I love cheese.  
I love orange juice freshly squeezed.  
Chorus: Love, love, love I really do.  
But most of all I love you.  
La, la, la, la, la, la, la  
La, la, la, la, la, la, la

- **Use music to help calm your child.** Music can have a calming effect on children. Soothing classical music with no words may be your best choice in helping your child settle down. Kids' Express Train has recorded some songs such as “The Owie Song” (**KET SET 1**) and “Howls and Hoots” (**KET SET 3**) to give a more relaxed and soothing beat. The song you choose to help your child calm down or transition to new situations really doesn't matter. There are some who have been successful

with even playing the harmonica. You may want to sing a lullaby or hum a tune. You may be surprised what song will soothe your child.

- **Listen to music while driving in the car.** Children who need speech and language practice can often get a lot of it done while riding in the car. We encourage singing simple songs that your child can sing, inviting him to sing along. Kids' Express Train songs are filled with songs that encourage singing along with the cue "your turn," but we encourage you, too, to sing your own favorites, encouraging your child to sing with you.
- **A word about music and its relationship to reading.** Every time you sing a song, you are preparing your child for reading. Yes, it's true. When you sing a song that rhymes, you are teaching a valuable lesson in phonemic awareness, a crucial skill that children need to be strong readers. Whenever you clap your hands to the beat of a song, you are helping your child learn about syllables in words, another crucial pre-reading skill. When you teach your child a song that emphasizes words starting with the same beginning letter sounds as in our song "Sing and Eat to the Alphabeat" – "Pizza, pickles, popcorn, too. P – P – P that's the sound that we do" – you are stressing another phonemic awareness skill. Not only that, songs that teach children new vocabulary will also have a direct effect on a child's later reading ability. Exposure to new vocabulary is essential for strong readers.

There are so many ways to use music that it seems a shame to give this technique only a few short pages. Our attempt is to whet your appetite about using music to help your child learn. Write some ideas of how you will try songs or raps with your child.

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Let's end our musical discussion with two stories illustrating the power of music.

Two-and-a-half-year-old Michael needed to practice producing sounds that created higher tongue elevation such as "ee" and "y." He was successful at times in imitating "yeah" in therapy. His parents were very motivated to help him learn "yes" and "no," so that he could answer questions during the more frustrating times when he was not understood. When Michael's dad asked how he could help, the song, "She Loves You, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah" by the Beatles seemed like the logical practice tool. Michael's dad practiced this song with Michael in the car on the way to and from daycare. The next week, guess who could say "yeah" with ease and precision? Michael could. Oh, the power of music.

William was a little two-year-old boy who had no words and had a limited ability to imitate, other than the sound, "uh." One day William's dad reported they had a new song to sing. He started the song by saying, "William, you start." So William proceeded to sing a simple song that he could simply sing. He sang, "Uh uh uh uh," and William's dad sang with gestures and a disco beat, "Staying alive. Staying alive." This wonderful rendition from the Bee Gees was powerful and incredibly touching.

**Combining Techniques 1, 2, 3, and 4** – As you sing songs with your child, remember the other techniques you have learned. After singing a song, try waiting and watching (technique one) to see how your child indicates that he wants you to sing it again. Singing songs naturally achieves the goal set in technique number two: Exaggerate and entice with your gestures and voice. Many songs are also filled with commenting about your child's world, the goal of technique number three. Add a song to your daily routines and move on to the next technique.