

How to Teach Auditory Skills to Oral Deaf Children

When we first learn that our child is deaf, many thoughts go through our minds, many uncertainties and many unanswered questions persist in our thinking. As time goes on we search for answers and rely on various professionals to help our children hear, to help our children listen and to help our children speak. One of the primary individuals in this process is the licensed Speech Pathologist. In some cases we will also be working with a Teacher of the Deaf or other professionals who provide therapy to our young child. Whether we are talking about a twelve month old or a thirty six month old, when we see these professionals they usually are working in a clinical setting and have very specific goals to cover at each session. When our children are young they will be put into a high chair and numerous exercises will be performed such as repeating the Ling Sounds, picking out animals in a closed set of four or five based on one key word or a key word embedded into a sentence. As time goes on the young child may be asked to pick two crayons from a set of 20 and color three different items. These are very structured tasks and there is a lot of room for error. These tasks must be performed to build on the hierarchy of receptive and expressive language. But is this the way we should work with our children at home? Should we try to model what the Speech Therapist does in a clinical setting? The answer to this question is a resounding NO.

Young children in general can pay attention to an hour of therapy, or maybe two to three hours of therapy per week, but trying to model this at home is just too much and the child will become very frustrated and disengaged. The much better method, and to me, the absolute correct method is to teach auditory skills and enhance expressive language ALL the time without the child ever knowing you are teaching them. How is this done, and how do we just interact with our children in a playful fun loving manner and teach auditory skills all at the same time? How do we consistently teach more and more vocabulary words while we are playing, while we are at the store, while we are driving the car? Let's face it, we are with our kids every day, all day long, our primary objective as educated caring parents is to turn every waking hour into a learning experience to build on receptive language skills which in turn will promote excellent oral speech. Let's look at this very structured systematic format which will help our children hear and speak to the best of their medical ability.

First and foremost I must emphasize that being knowledgeable on how language is acquired is an absolute necessity. Knowing why the speech therapist is doing what they are doing is very important. Being able to report the progress and pitfalls of our young child's language in a clear articulate manner is essential. This is why I continue to emphasize the need for a professionally written language guide on how children acquire receptive and expressive language. Also having the knowledge of how long a cochlear implanted child should take to gain certain goals on the

various language hierarchies is crucial. This is why I continually emphasize to PLEASE order the AusPlan book from Children's Hospital Oakland Audiology Department at 510-428-3885, ext. 2017, (\$35 plus \$10 shipping.) An outline for this book can be found on this web site at: www.deafchildrenspeak.com , this book will lay out precisely how language is acquired in young deaf children.

So we have laid the groundwork for what the professional will be doing, the educational background that every parent going through this process needs to have, now let us look at the very enjoyable process of how do we play with our children and teach them auditory skills at the same time? Keep in mind that this is a long term process that will take approximately three to four years to teach our children excellent auditory and expressive language skills that will rival their hearing peers.

I am going to first concentrate on very young children who just received their cochlear implants within the last 12 months. I will then discuss older children approximately three years old. From the day a child is implanted the beginning of the receptive hierarchy begins. By taking the AusPlan book a parent can pinpoint exactly where their child is and know precisely what the current and next steps will be in audition and speech. By following what this written document states as the procedure to teach receptive language, a parent can be in complete control of how much their child learns. By using all of the techniques mentioned, an oral child will have an ever expanding vocabulary and language skill set.

First I am going to explain three words that will be part of your educational arsenal. These three words and how to use them will be the basis of almost everything you do at home. As I continue on with this article and go into older children who have had their CI's for two or three years I will continually refer back to these three words, so please fully understand their meanings. Each word below is listed in the chronological order of how children learn receptive and expressive language.

Narrating is listed first because it is 100% talking and feeding in nouns and verbs to the child to recall at a later date. Modeling is listed next because this is a function of getting the child to say what they should be saying at that point and time in an expressive manner. Expanding language is last because at this stage the child has a handle on expressive speech and we as parents are just trying to expand or make their utterances longer. It could be going from two words to three words per utterance or it could be taking two complete sentences and conjoining them into a longer 10 – 12 word sentence by adding “*and*” or some other conjoining word.

Narrating – Narrating is the act of explaining things all day long in a very systematic manner. Try to keep things in blocks or chunks, not too much, just enough so the child can pick it up. Repetition is very important, the same thing every day or every night. You are setting the table and you say “Let's grab the fork (grab the fork and show it to her) let's grab the spoon (grab the spoon and show it to her.) Let's grab the napkin, grab the napkin and show it to her, set each

item down on the table and name it as you set it down, looking at her and then looking at the item.

Go to the store and grab three fruits; “look baby, the orange is round, it is yummy, mmm (show the orange, emphasize round.) The banana is yellow (show the banana), the apple is green, I like apples,” (show the apple.) Keep things in blocks or chunks, do this for a few weeks then test to see if the child is picking up new words for their receptive language.

“Mommy is cooking lunch, I am going to grab the bread and make a sandwich. I am also going to put chicken and mayonnaise on my yummy sandwich, mmm.” (Show the bread, show the chicken and mayonnaise.) When the sandwich is done show it to the child and say, “look baby, mommy made a sandwich for you. Mmm, sandwiches are good. Let’s get some milk for our sandwich.” Grab the milk, pour it and say “Mommy is pouring the milk in the glass.” Always give great praise each time the child tries to speak or understands receptive language.

The key here is to repeat words numerous times and then give a little bit of an explanation. Do not embed your key word within a long sentence, say the key word one time, and then add it to a very short sentence. If you were just to go to the store and toss all of the fruit into a bag and say nothing, or pour the milk and set it in front of the child by saying nothing, what has she learned? By using this format you are saying the word three to five times and showing the object at the same time. By doing this for a few weeks the child should get a good handle on the words, at this time testing would be appropriate.

To test the child for receptive language, set three or four items on the floor and then say “Banana, give Mommy the banana” When she reaches for the correct fruit you have made progress. If she does not reach for the correct fruit then grab the banana and say “Banana, this is the banana, the banana is yellow” and hand it to her. Keep building on these words and then add a new set of items to teach for a few more weeks. Try to make a point to “teach” the items that the therapist is working with in the therapy sessions. (Keep in mind this structured testing is only done for very short and brief moments, five minutes max. The rest of the day is just playing as described. The purpose of the testing is to verify that the child is gaining new words receptively.)

Modeling – Modeling is saying the correct word or phrase for the child in response to a question. So a person says “How old are you?” The child is silent and the parent says “Two, I am Two.” Not too much just a short word or phrase. Look at the child and then look at the person asking the question. Do this whenever the child needs to fulfill a statement. But be careful; give the child a chance to speak for themselves, if they say nothing, then use modeling. The child reaches out and starts to moan. The parent says “I want milk” put your finger on the child’s mouth and say it again “I want milk” Someone asks “What is your name?” The child is silent. The parent looks at the child and says “Lisa, my name is Lisa,” Looking at the child then at the person asking the question.

Expanding Language – Expanding Language is the ability to take what your child is already saying and adding to it. By following the AusPlan book you will know the very next step in language acquisition. Your speech therapist will be doing this on a consistent basis. So if the child is currently saying two words try to model three or four words. No more, just the next step in the process. The child says “Mommy fruit” You look at her and say “Mommy, I want fruit.” The child says “go park” You turn to her and say “Let’s go to the park.” In our family we prefaced these words a lot of time with “You could say, let’s go to the park.” Sometimes saying the expanded sentence twice is very beneficial.

As children get older their expansion of language will be an ever increasing task. When I drove my daughter to school in the morning it took forty-five minutes. One of our favorite games in the car would be to look out the window and talk about the weather and name as many different objects that we could find. I would say “What do you see out the window?” She would respond “a sign, a car, a doggy” I replied to her “I see a yellow sign, a blue car and a big doggy” always expanding what she would say. By doing this for a few months she caught on and was more descriptive in what she was seeing. As time progressed, we would always work on expanding her language. By the third year of school I would ask “what do you see out the window?” She would respond “I see a yellow school bus, I see a man riding a bicycle.” These are six- and seven-word sentences, fantastic! Now let’s conjoin the sentences and make one long grammatically correct sentence. “Gabriella, you could say, I see a yellow school bus AND a man riding a bicycle,” emphasizing the word AND. We are now talking about a twelve-word grammatically correct sentence, always helping the child understand the next step to expand their speech and describe their environment.

One other note here, get rid of the news in your car, get rid of the music in your car and if your child likes children’s songs then play children’s songs and sing along. My daughter would know the title of the songs just by the first few bars or words. It was amazing. She would say, “Old MacDonald” and I changed the tracks on the CD player, she would respond, “no, no, no,” or “yes that one Daddy,” by just hearing the first few notes! Then we would sing along together.

Music Together www.musictogether.com which is a national program, is an excellent resource for this type of auditory training. The program is designed with one instructor who gets the children to sing children’s songs during class in a fun setting. The company will then provide CD’s for all of the kids songs they are singing, so you can play in your car or at home. I strongly recommend this program to enhance social skills and auditory skills.

Keep in mind, even with the instructions given above to help with audition and language, it is very important to also speak in full context just like you would with a hearing child. When an audition or language opportunity arises capitalize on it and emphasize the importance of it by using one of the above mentioned methods.

The First Step

In the beginning immediately after activation, sound awareness is the main focus, not words or nouns. So in the very beginning point out every sound, i.e., the phone rings and you say “I hear that, that is the phone” and point to your ear. Whether it is the phone, the door, birds, a car, a vacuum cleaner, whatever the sound is, point to your ear and say “I hear that, that is the_____.” As a little time goes by learning various nouns and expanding on the receptive vocabulary will become crucial.

Keep names simple, one name for each item. Sit down with your spouse and make a list of about 50 items in the home that have one name and one name only. Many items have numerous names and synonyms. You should use only one name in the very beginning. Use plate, not saucer, phone, not telephone, shirt, not blouse, pants, not Levis, etc. The exact words don't really matter. What does matter is that the same word be used all of the time. Type up a list, post it on your refrigerator, and let your speech therapist know what words you are using and say these words hundreds of times while pointing to those items. Use the words in sentences and always reinforce with a visual, pointing of the finger or showing the object. Children's picture books are perfect for this type of teaching. When your child reacts appropriately give a great deal of praise and let them know you are proud of them. It is very important that our children be in play groups and other social events with hearing children. Try to have your child around hearing children as much as possible. This will help with speech and language.

All children love to play with toys. When they are very young numerous toys can help with discrimination and listening. LeapFrog and other manufacturers make toys that require the child to react appropriately to a sound, a song, a word, or even a phrase. These very special toys need to be in place from the very beginning. Children will play with these toys for hours, learning how to discriminate different sounds and words. When buying a toy be very conscious of how it will help your child's listening and discrimination skills. You do not want toys that just make noise; you want toys that require your child to decipher what is being said and react appropriately. To go one step further, I purchased a small xylophone for our daughter so she can hear the different tones and frequencies of sound. We would sit there and bang on the xylophone and she was learning that sounds can be soft, loud, high pitched, low pitched, etc.

Speak to your child all the time. Again, look directly at their face so they can see your mouth. Explain everything to them. Be within 3 - 4 feet when speaking and just talk, talk, talk, in English. This is what these kids need, a huge input of quality language so they can record everything in their auditory memory. Then when the time is right it will come out and just keep flowing out until they are talking in full sentences. Read every night if possible. Play children's music CD's in the car, sing songs, and talk, talk, talk. As time goes on and your child becomes better at their receptive language skills, the therapist and the parents will then pull back and start providing more challenging tasks based on auditory only requests with no visual or facial cues.

Make sure that the processor(s) are working correctly every day. Make sure they are on the right program, the batteries are charged and that the Sensitivity and Volume settings are correct. Read the manufacturer manuals or watch their informational DVD's to become familiar with the workings of your child's particular processor. In addition to this, file every medical report you receive so they can be used at the IFSP / IEP meetings.

In regards to teaching an Oral child a second language, I personally would hold off until the child is speaking three to four word utterances and has excellent receptive language. At that time, the second language could be introduced. The mix of 75 % to 25% to me is a good mix if a second language is used. I personally feel that treating an Oral deaf child like a hearing child in this regard is confusing. PLEASE check with your therapist and do your own research.

A Day in the Life of an Oral Child

As I have said many times previously, keep all of these writings in a folder on your computer, print them out and refer to them as the years go on. Do not read anything that is written on this web site or in the AusPlan book one time and set it down, it is to be used consistently as often as possible. Once all the information is organized the spouse who is less involved in the process should read all of the pertinent documents. By following this format, you will become extremely educated and knowledgeable on the Oral process and how best to advocate for your child.

So let us look at a typical day for a young deaf child with cochlear implants and all of the ways she can learn auditory skills. This particular child has been implanted for less than twelve months. It is 8:00 AM and Mommy wakes up her precious daughter. Many kids do not want their implant on right away and that is O.K, just try to get it on in the first 30 minutes. Make sure the implant is working properly and everything is OK for the best hearing possible. With this said, a full understanding of your child's audiological testing would be needed. A parent needs to know how well their child hears.

So you wake up your child, they stumble to the couch in the front room and you turn on some cartoons. The processor(s) goes on and you say "Good morning." As an educated parent, you need to evaluate what cartoons help auditory learning and which ones do not. Cartoons that speak to the child and ask questions are excellent. Dora, Diego, Sesame Street and others are very good. Watch the cartoons and ask yourself if it is teaching anything useful and is it asking my child to respond to a question. As the child watches cartoons for twenty minutes, Mommy is cooking breakfast. Mommy puts all of the food on the table and she gets her child to sit down.

As Mommy sits down she says: "How is my beautiful daughter today? Look, Mommy made you an egg, some bacon and some fresh strawberries, mmm this looks so good. The strawberries are

red and the eggs are white, (pointing to each item.) Mommy also gave you some orange juice,” (picking up the glass and showing the child.) Mommy and daughter start to eat.

Mommy then says, “What should we do today?” Mommy then pauses so her daughter can answer the question. “I think we should both go down to the park and play in the sandbox, remember the nice kids you met last time we went to the park?” Mommy makes an inquisitive expression on her face hoping for a reply. The child smiles and acknowledges that she remembers by a nod of her head and a giggle. The young child then points to her glass because the orange juice is empty. Mommy says “What do you say? What do you say?” Nothing comes from the child, modeling is needed. “I want juice. Can you say I want juice?” (The word orange is probably too big of a word for this small child so we just say “I want juice.”) The glass is picked up, the juice is poured and it is set down in front of the child and Mommy says “here is your juice.”

Breakfast ends and we go to the room to put on our clothes. All of the clothes are laid out on the bed. Mommy picks up the pants and says “Let’s put on our pants, one leg in, then the other leg in, these pants are nice, I like how cute they are, these are your pants.” Then, “let’s put on your shirt, look this shirt has a picture of Elmo on it; Elmo looks happy, raise your arms so Mommy can put on your shirt.” Put the socks and the shoes on in the same way, repeating the name of the clothing item many times. (In the beginning always look at the child when naming the item(s.) The same thing EVERY day, explain every piece of clothes and every bit of food the child eats.

Mommy and her daughter go to the bathroom. “O.K. baby, I am going to turn on the water and wash your face, wash, wash, wash, Oh, you look so nice with a clean face. Open up your mouth so Mommy can take the toothbrush and toothpaste and brush your teeth, brush, brush, brush.” (Pointing at each item and picking up each item as we describe what it is.)

We put our precious daughter into a stroller and off we go to the park. As we leave the house we pass by a car, we say “look a red car” and we pass right by it, we then say “look, a white car” and we pass by it, then we point across the street and tell our daughter, “I see a blue car next to that house, do you see a blue car?” The child looks at it and smiles. We are pushing the stroller down the sidewalk and we come upon a bunch of flowers along the side of the road. We tell our precious child, “I see a bunch of red roses, oh these flowers are so beautiful.” We then pick one and hand it to our child and say “These flowers are so pretty, I love the way they smell (and then smell the flower,) put it under her nose so she can smell it also. Give the flower to her and say “Flower” one last time.

Once we get to the park our child is ready to get out of the stroller and play in the sandbox with the other children, we let her play with the three hearing kids for as long as she likes and Mommy sits at a park bench to relax. After a while we walk over to the sand box and ask one of

the children “What is your name?” The child responds “My name is Robert.” And “how old are you?” The child responds “three years old.” Your child is watching this interaction, learning how people converse with each other. We then say “This is my daughter Lisa, she is eighteen months old. Lisa can you say Hi to Robert?” The child looks at the other kid and says “Hi.” With this in mind, any opportunity a child gets to watch people converse is a great learning experience. We pack up our things and head home. We stop by the flowers one more time and look at them and name them again. We find a tree and describe that it has green leaves and a brown trunk. We go by the same cars and name the colors again, we are now back home.

It is about 12:30 and time for lunch. We put our young daughter into a high chair and set out a box of Macaroni and Cheese, strawberries, an orange and some cooked chicken in front of her. We explain each item then we ask “What do you want for lunch?” She points to the Mac and Cheese and the Orange. “What do you say?” “I want Mac and Cheese.” “I want an Orange.” Can you say this? Try to get her to at least say one word “Mac” or “Ore,” anything, give great praise and start cooking.

After a yummy lunch, Mommy remembers she has to go to the grocery store to pick up a few things. We put our daughter in the car seat and explain to her: “I am going to play your favorite song, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” Then Mommy starts to sing “twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are...” looking at her daughter and moving her hands. She then starts the car, puts in the CD and along comes that famous song Twinkle Twinkle. Mommy moves her hands and makes motions as the song is playing, the young child is laughing and giggling and trying to pronounce the words. At the store we put our daughter into a shopping cart. We go inside and explain “We need to buy some vegetables for Daddy’s dinner.” We roll over to the vegetable section, we grab a head of lettuce, some potatoes and some carrots, naming each item and describing it, then setting it into the shopping cart. We go to another aisle and tell our daughter we need to buy some water, we grab a case of bottled water show it to her and set it in the shopping cart. At the checkout counter we off load all of our items by naming each one.

We get back home and there is only one hour left until her two brothers come home from school. In the next hour we are going to gather up five or six of her toy animals and describe them to her, we are then going to describe how much fun we are going to have when we go to the Zoo this Saturday with Daddy. (Since today is Friday, it is OK to talk about the Zoo. Children at this young age can only remember things for a very short period of time, I would not mention the Zoo if it were two or three days away.)

We grab all the toy animals and say, “this is the horse, this is the cow, this is the duck, this is the elephant. All of these animals live at the Zoo, do you like the Zoo?” The child says “yes.” We grab the horse and make horse noises and tell our young child “the horse eats hay, the horse likes to run, and cowboys like to ride horses.” We then grab the cow and say “Mooo, the cow gives us

milk, the cow lives on a farm.” Then we grab the duck and say “the duck lives in the water, the duck likes to swim, the duck is yellow. We grab a book full of animals and explain everything we are going to see at the Zoo.

After playing together for a while Lisa’s two brothers knock on the door, they are 10 and 12 years old. Mommy looks at her daughter, throws her hands out and says “what is that?” Mommy looks inquisitive, Mommy is waiting for the child to say something or point to the door. The child does neither. Then Mommy puts her hand next to her ear, (the boys knock again) and Mommy says “I hear the door, let’s go see who is at the door.” (See if the child catches on at this point.) Then go to the door and open it up and say “Look, your two brothers are at the door.” Sound excited and happy, name the door a few times and let the children in. (Any environmental sound should be pointed out and emphasized, always ask the child what they hear and then point out the environmental sound naming it multiple times. After answering the door, Mommy realizes that it is time for her daughter to nap. Lisa lies down and sleeps for an hour, she then wakes up and is ready to play some more.

After some initial holding and talking with our daughter we ask her “do you want to draw a picture?” She says “crayons.” Mommy looks at her and uses a language expansion technique and says “I want my crayons.” Mom and daughter go to the dining table and get a coloring book. Mom turns to a page that has a house, some trees, a car, the sun, the sky, a bird and a few other things in the picture. Mom sets out five crayons, no more, no less. The crayons are red, blue, green, orange and yellow. Mom then describes each color of each crayon and says “can you color the sun yellow?” The child grabs the green crayon and starts to color the page. Mom says, “no, no Lisa, Mommy said yellow.” Hand her the yellow crayon and say “this is the yellow crayon” and ask her if she knows where the sun is. She then colors the sun and all is good. Mommy grabs the blue crayon and says “look baby, Mommy is coloring the car blue.” Mommy then grabs the green crayon and says “let’s make the tree green,” as she starts to color the leaves. Then Mommy turns to her daughter and says “Can you color the house red?” This back and forth style of playing is used to teach by example and to give the child a little bit of leeway to color on her own. An hour goes by and Daddy walks in the house.

Daddy plays with his daughter for a long period of time, and then dinner is ready to be served. Before serving dinner Daddy says, “Lisa, can you help me set the table?” (Even though this is a long sentence the child knows this particular sentence because she picks out the key word “table” within it.) Daddy then goes to the kitchen and gets all of the silverware, all of the plates and all the cups, naming each item as he sets it on the table. “This is the fork” Daddy says, looking at his daughter and showing the item. “This is the spoon; can you put one spoon here, and one spoon here?” (Dad is pointing to the two place settings missing the spoons while saying this.) Continue on with this format as described previously in this document. This is done every night and after a

few weeks or even a month, Dad can be in the dining room and he can call out for certain utensils and the child should be able to get the proper items. Repetition is the key, every night.

At the dinner table the entire family is eating, the conversation is very structured and organized. Multiple people are not talking at the same time. One person talks, one person answers and this goes on for the entire dinner. The child is learning how conversation is structured in a back and forth format. Include little Lisa in the conversation whenever appropriate. Explain to the family what Mommy and Lisa did that particular day. Get her to laugh and smile at her actions, get her involved to remember what took place that afternoon.

After dinner the entire family watches a Disney movie in the front room. Try to involve your child in the format of the movie. Ask questions about what is going on, as your child becomes older, predicting the future outcome of the plot is a good exercise. After an hour, the movie ends and it is time for bed. We go to the bathroom to brush our child's teeth as described previously. We take off all of the clothes by naming each item, we then grab the pajamas and explain why people use pajamas and tuck our little girl in. We then read a short story as we do each evening and say "Good Night" to our daughter.

Mom pulls off both processors and puts them in the de-humidifier, she then charges the batteries and sits down at the dining room table. Mom and Dad then read for about 45 minutes to become more educated on the Oral language process. This is a typical day and it all starts over again in the morning.

Please look at the numerous ways a child can learn vocabulary, and be challenged to speak in the preceding example. Think about all the ways you can interchange items, but use the same format as described. Remember to keep the information in a concise and orderly fashion, not too much too fast, just the right amount so our kids can grasp the words and remember them.

Auditory Training for Older Children

Fast forward 24 months and our child is now three years old. (24 months post implant.) At this stage, kids should have a good grasp on auditory only responses, answering open set questions, following two and three part commands, picking out two key words in a sentence, having a back and forth conversation with two to five exchanges, discriminating five rhyming words, and they should be starting spontaneous expressive speech with multiple word utterances. Children should also be able to sing complete nursery rhymes at this stage. If you do not understand the preceding terminology, please read Chapter five of *A Fathers Love* (on this web site) and reference the AusPlan book.

So at this age, what can a parent do to enhance auditory and expressive speech skills? Let's look at some of the many things that happen in our daily lives and incorporate the receptive and expressive skill building that is needed throughout this entire process. By looking at the AusPlan book an educated and well informed parent can place their child on all three hierarchies and understand the next stage in this process. IFSP and IEP goals should follow the next level of language acquisition as explained by this particular book and by your primary speech therapists ongoing experience with your child. Please also note the timelines given to reach different levels of auditory and speech comprehension and check to see if your child is keeping on track. Auditory training is an ongoing process that will be happening every day. It is also very important to have a speech pathologist analyze your child's repertoire of speech sounds to make sure all sounds are coming in as expected. At this stage expanding language (as described previously), providing more descriptive explanations, using multiple synonyms, putting objects in groups, using verbs, using proper grammar and even conjoining sentences will be part of the overall tasks. Exactly which tasks are to be worked on will depend on where your child is on the three hierarchy levels of Audition, Speech and Language.

So let us look at a typical day; It is Wednesday morning and we must take little Johnny to the Auditory Verbal / Oral school he has been attending over the last 24 months. We get up and cook breakfast. "Johnny what do you want to eat this morning, pancakes or eggs?" He answers "Do you want milk or juice?" he answers this also. These questions are asked 100% auditory only with no visual cues. To put a little challenge to it, to check how well he hears in a noisy situation, try moving the pots and pans around as you ask these questions and see how well he understands. As you sit down to have breakfast you start a conversation with your son, "Johnny did you know that some eggs are brown, many are white and eggs are used for baking quite a bit. We can make a cake for Daddy this weekend and I will show you how the recipe calls for eggs." Johnny says "Mmm. I love cake." "You know eggs come from chickens and milk comes from cows right?" He answers "Of course Mommy!"

We finish breakfast and go to the bathroom to brush our teeth and take a bath. In an auditory only manner we tell our son "Johnny can you brush your teeth, then go to your room and take all of your clothes off? We are going to take a bath this morning," (quite a long statement with two key commands; brush teeth, and remove clothes.) If Johnny does both directions flawlessly then he is listening and comprehending quite good, many children will get done with the first task and then ask what else needs to be done. These two part commands can be incorporated in many situations, just think about what to say. When the bath is done we look out the window and we explain to our son; "Look the clouds are really heavy and it looks like it might rain today. So what should we wear?" In a playful manner say "should we wear these shorts and a T-Shirt, or should we wear long pants and a jacket?" He starts to smile and giggle. He says "We need jacket," Mommy expands his sentence and says "We need A jacket AND long pants."

The child gets dressed and they are both ready to leave. Go outdoors, stand on the porch and say “It looks like rain, what do we need in the rain?” If the child does not answer say, “What do we need in the rain to cover our heads?” The boy should answer “An Umbrella.” Open set questions should be the norm at this stage, always praise your child when they give a right answer or try to pronounce new words.

Now we get the umbrella and we go to the car. Inside the car we ask our son “Do you know where rain comes from?” He says “The sky.” “Well actually Johnny rain comes from the clouds up in the sky, so next time you’re asked you will know that all of those clouds up there hold a lot of water.” So off we go to the Auditory Verbal / Oral school. We then discuss all the fun things that are going to happen at the school that day, trying to get three or four exchanges going back and forth.

As we are driving, we then ask our son “Can you tell mommy what you see out the window?” Johnny says “I see a bus.” Mommy says “I see a YELLOW bus,” emphasizing the word yellow. What else do you see? “Johnny says “a house, a car” Mommy says “I see a BIG house. I see a BLUE car,” always trying to add descriptive words. As time goes on you can conjoin two short sentences with the word “and.” By conjoining sentences you will take the short three to five word sentences your son is saying now and turn them into longer eight to ten word sentences.

At the Oral school, Johnny’s program consists of two and one half hours of classroom and 50 minutes of therapy three times per week. The class is run by skilled professionals who fully understand auditory oral language. This class has approximately five to seven children. This in my opinion is an adequate program for a three year old, anything less to me is lacking. (To read up on adequate program frequencies, please read Chapter 6 of “*A Father’s Love*” on this web site.) During therapy time the therapist puts out 20 crayons and hands Johnny a coloring book which has 20 items on it. She stands behind his chair and says “Johnny can you pick up the red crayon and color the house? Also pick up the yellow crayon and color the sun.” Johnny does what he is asked flawlessly. The therapist lowers her voice and gives another two part command; Johnny accomplishes that task flawlessly also. Now the therapist is going to throw a curve ball. She is going to change the word order and the action. So she says “Johnny can you grab the purple crayon and color the car, and can you give me the black crayon?” Johnny gets half of this task correct but as we all know practice makes perfect. (The preceding example used two closed sets of 20 items and uses sentences with two part commands. Two sentences with two two part commands to me is a four part command, but I would check with a SLP on that. The key words in the sentences were the color of the crayons and what the action was to be.) Johnny is doing very well receptively!

School lets out and Johnny and his Mom go out to lunch. They both sit down and the waiter comes over. “What can I get for you two?” the waiter asks. Mom says “I would like the chicken

breast lunch with a diet coke. Johnny what do you want?" (Look at him and wait till he answers, speaking has big rewards... yummy food.) Johnny says "peanut butter and jelly" "Do you want a peanut butter and jelly SANDWICH?" "Yes" he says. What do you want to drink? "Milk please." Mom and her son eat lunch and drive home with the children's songs from the "*Music Together*" program I spoke of earlier playing on the stereo. Remember, auditory training in the car, it is not time to be listening to your music or the news. Children's songs are the key. (In this case it is a 45 minute drive to and from school so this is an intensive 1 ½ hours per day of listening.) The two get home and sit in front of the T.V. to watch cartoons for about one and a half hours.

After the cartoons, Johnny then goes out in front of his house and starts to play with a group of three, four and five year old children. He is having a great time. All the kids are talking amongst themselves and Johnny is enjoying his "free" time. (Playing with hearing kids is crucial to gain good auditory and speech skills.)

Dad comes home and Mom calls Johnny back into the house. The young boy is going to help his Mother set the table. Mom removes the silverware drawer and sets it on the counter; she places the napkins next to the silverware. "Johnny can you grab four napkins and put them on the table?" He does as he is told. "Can you grab four spoons and four forks and put those on the table?" (These tasks are fairly advanced for a three year old, but listening and recognizing the key words is the key.) "By the way, we need some placemats." Let him figure out how many to get, if he gets less than four placemats, question him about why he did what he did. The family sits down and eats dinner. Mommy and Daddy explain what they are going to eat that evening. Mommy summarizes what happened that day and she throws questions or funny remarks at her son to keep him tuned into the conversation and happy. Dinner finishes and the family goes to the living room to watch a little T.V.

At age three or four there are extremely good DVD's to help with audition and learning abilities. For example, LeapFrog makes a DVD which concentrates on the alphabet, one that concentrates on phonetic sounds, and there is also a simple math DVD. There are a few of these funny, cute and educational DVD's from Leapfrog. (In my opinion the toys made from LeapFrog Inc. are very, very good for hearing impaired children. At age three there is a whole array of toys to help educate, help with audition and expand a child's thinking. Please try to find these toys or similar brands to help in the areas of language and cognition.) Richard Scarry makes nicely formatted DVD's that go through counting, the alphabet, colors, concepts such as inside, outside, over, under, and more. Please find his information on the Internet. Johnny sits down to watch 30 minutes of his favorite cartoon / DVD. He is learning and doesn't even realize it. After the DVD finishes, the family watches T.V. for a little bit longer, and now it is time to go to bed.

Before we put Johnny to bed, we read a story to him and ask a few questions. “What do you think will happen next? What would you do? Why do you think the girl did that?” Sometimes children have problems with these types of questions. By going to therapy for so long, there always seemed to be a “right” answer for everything. Now we are giving our child the flexibility to make up an answer to whatever he feels is appropriate. There is no right or wrong answer and sometimes this needs to be explained so they can grasp that sometimes many answers could be correct.

We undress our child and put him to bed. The day has come to an end and the expansion of language will continue tomorrow. The speech pathologist should be doing standardized language testing based on hearing children. If Johnny is not age appropriate now then hopefully by age four he will be. Just because you are told that your child has age appropriate language, in my opinion is not good enough, the receptive and expressive skill building still needs to continue. (You will know in your gut when you can step back and treat your child similar to a hearing child, and lay off of the “drills.”)

What you have just read in my opinion is the most detailed information you will find on the internet of how to work with Auditory Oral / Verbal children. It is detailed and FREE. Yes there are many books that may explain the same thing, but do a search on the Net and see how little information actually comes up.

Please put these practices to good use every single day of your child’s habilitation program and you will be one of the select few individuals that fully understands the process, is highly educated on the process and knows exactly what their child needs at any given time. Please email me with any questions you may have.

Good luck on your language journey.

James Hall
Deaf Children Can Speak
www.deafchildren canspeak.com
jameshall526@aol.com