

## Language Scaffolding Introduction

This Language Scaffolding strategy has been developed to help you expose young children to a wide variety of vocabulary words, and to encourage you to use every opportunity during the school day to build language skills. Owens (2001) noted that the best time to build children’s language is within the first five years of life. The more words and language structures that a child is exposed to, the more he or she will be able to understand and use these words in grammatically correct phrases and sentences. In addition, children who have a well-developed vocabulary are more likely to become good readers. One of our goals, as prekindergarten teachers, is to ensure that all children have a strong foundation in language and vocabulary that will contribute to reading success in elementary school. Language Scaffolding is a strategy that promotes oral language skills.

In this booklet, you will find that each language-building activity is paired with a daily classroom activity and vocabulary words associated with that activity. By making a conscious effort to use these vocabulary words and language activities, you will be helping to foster vocabulary and language development in your children.

### Activities for Promoting Language in Preschoolers

*The following activities can be used in any preschool setting to facilitate a rich language environment and to promote communication development. These activities can be used throughout the day, and can be embedded into daily routines:*

**Encourage Peer-to-Peer Conversations** – Encouraging peer-to-peer interactions gives children the opportunity to interact and converse with one another. For example, if a child comes to you and says, “I want the red crayon,” you could redirect the child to the other child who has the red crayon. You could say, “Ask Brett, ‘May I use the red crayon when you are finished?’”

**Promote Choice Making** - There are many times throughout the day when you can offer choices of two or more objects to children. Some of these choices include materials during play activities or foods during snack time. Children are most likely to make a choice when a preferred object is presented with a non-preferred object. During snack time, you can offer a choice by saying, “Would you like the raisins or goldfish?” Then encourage the child to verbalize their choice. Keep in mind that children are more likely to communicate their desire for preferred objects.

**Narrate Events** – Narration is like being a commentator for a sports event heard over the radio. Your role as narrator is to talk about everything that the child is doing as if you were describing it to someone who is not in the room to see it. The goal of narration is to pair the child’s play and actions with the appropriate language. As a child repeatedly hears the words that go along with what he/she is doing, that child is more likely to use more productive language about his own play. For example, if children are in the block area, you can narrate by saying, “Look how Jimmy is taking the red block and placing it on the very top of the tower. Oh no! I think it’s going to fall! Crash!! The tower fell to the ground.”

Half Page Printing Directions: Print out the half page flipchart. There are two boxes printed on one piece of paper. You should cut on the solid line to separate the

**Present Vocabulary with Pictures or Objects** – Pair actual objects (when possible) or pictures of objects with new words. Children are more likely to learn the meaning of a word or the function of an object when the actual object/picture is present. In this way, children can pair what you say about the object (auditory input) with what the object looks (visual input) and what the object feels like (tactile input). For example, while holding the broom in the housekeeping center you could say, “This is a broom. We can use it to sweep up dirt from the floor.”

**Use Specific Language** – When talking to children, teachers should be as specific as possible with the language they use. Teachers should avoid using general non-specific words (e.g., that, there, and it). For example, rather than saying to a child, “Can you please put *that* over *there*?” be specific and say, “Can you please put the *book* on my desk?” In this way, children will hear the names of objects over and over. The more children hear a word being used correctly, the more likely they will be to use that word properly on their own.

**Create Silly Situations** - During a daily routine, set up a situation that is silly or out of the ordinary. The implementation of this activity is most effective when used during a familiar routine. For example, during morning circle, you can ask the children to get their blankets and go to their spots for nap time. This creates an opportunity for the children to explain the absurdity of the situation! When you create a silly situation, you are encouraging children to verbalize an explanation which contributes to language development.

**Provide Opportunities Where Help is Needed** - There are times when you can set up situations so that children will need to ask for assistance which is likely to encourage communication. Presenting attractive materials that require assistance to operate can encourage children to communicate their need for help from adults and peers. For example, during outside play, you can give a child a bottle of bubbles with the top screwed on too tightly. If the child wants to blow bubbles, he or she will have to ask for your assistance in opening the bottle. Keep in mind that some children may not have the language skills to ask for help. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to model how to ask for help. For example, if you notice a child becoming frustrated because he or she wants to

blow bubbles but is unable to open the bottle, you might say, “It looks like you are having difficulty opening the bottle of bubbles. Would you like to ask for help?”

**Model Desired Responses** – You can use modeling to demonstrate to children a sound, a word, or a language form that they do not yet produce on their own. Modeling can also be used to demonstrate to children what it is they are expected to say or do. You can model appropriate behaviors and language by taking the first turn in a game, correcting an incorrect word pronunciation, or by having a child repeat a grammatically correct sentence. For example, if a child points at a picture of a star and says, “Look! It’s a tar!,” you may reply, “Yes, I see the star. Can you say star?” This encourages the child to pronounce the word correctly.

**Alter Routines** – Altering routines is purposely creating a circumstance where something is out of the ordinary. One way to implement this activity is by not giving the children all the materials they need to carry out a familiar activity, which gives children the opportunity to make a request. This is an effective prompt for language when the cues are obvious. For example, during a painting activity, you can provide the children with smocks, paper, and a paintbrush, but “forget” to supply the children with paint. This would give the children the opportunity to request the paint. Please keep in mind that the children must be familiar with the routine before it is altered.

**Expand Child’s Response** – Expansions occur when an adult fills in the missing features of something a child has said, along with repeating the child’s utterance. For example, if a child says “ball,” the adult may expand on that by saying, “Yes, I see the small red ball.” In this way, the adult is acknowledging what the child has said and exposing him or her to more descriptive language. When an adult expands on a child’s utterance, the adult should *always* include the word or words the child said in his or her original utterance.

## Encourage Peer-to-Peer Conversations

**Daily Activity:** Outside Play

**Vocabulary:**

Sand	Monkey Bars
Slide	Jogging
Swing	Bench
Catch	Jump rope
Throw	Jungle Gym
Wagon	Gymnastics
Playground	Cooperate
Safety Rules	



**To promote language development...**

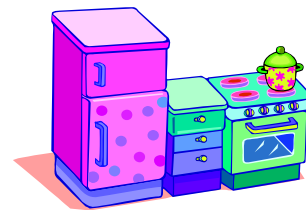
Encourage Peer-to-Peer Conversations - When a child complains that he wants to use a specific toy that another child is already using, such as a shovel, give him the words to use and encourage him to ask the other child for the toy. "Please may I have a turn with the shovel?"

## Promote Choice-Making

**Daily Activity:** Dramatic Play Center

**Vocabulary:**

Sink	Faucet
Broom	Iron
Stove	Chef
Oven	Recipe
Refrigerator	Freezer
Microwave	Burner
High Chair	Utensils
Cupboard	Gourmet



**To promote language development...**

Promote Choice-Making – The teacher can ask a child, "Do you want to bake your brownies in the *oven* or in the *microwave*?" The child should be encouraged to answer, "I want to bake my brownies in the (*oven/microwave*)."

## Narrate Events

**Daily Activity:** Dramatic Play Center

**Vocabulary:**

Tie	Role Play	Dress
Mask	Dress up	Mirror
Skirt	Drama	Make-believe
Jewelry	Pretend	Relatives
Costume	Appearance	Mask
Veterinarian	Gown	



**To promote language development...**

Narrate Events – As the children are pretending to be veterinarians, talk about what you see them doing as if you were narrating their play. For example, “I see Hanna listening to the puppy’s heart. I like the way Bradley is helping to hold the puppy while Hanna examines it.” The teacher can also narrate her own actions. For example, as you model using dress up clothes, say everything as you do it: “Today I want to wear the princess dress. First, I’ll put the dress over my head. Now I need some help with the zipper on the back. Amy, will you help me with the zipper?”

## Present Vocabulary with Pictures or Objects

**Daily Activity:** Art

**Vocabulary:**

Color	Stencils	Draw
Pastel	Paint	Easel
Paintbrush	Canvas	Chalk
Sketch	Smock	Landscape
Artist	Primary Color	Secondary Color
Watercolors		



**To promote language development...**

Present Vocabulary with Pictures or Objects - When introducing a painting activity, show the children the actual objects as you introduce the materials they will use. “Today we are going to paint. We need to wear a smock to protect our clothes (show smock). Clip your paper onto the easel (show easel). It will keep our paper upright so that we can paint easily.”

## Use Specific Language



**Daily Activity:** Music & Movement

**Vocabulary:**

Stop CD player

Go Tape player

Listen Instrument

March Composer

Music Lyrics

Clap hands Pitch

Sing Rhythm

Dance Melody

Beat Tempo

**To promote language development...**

Use Specific Language – When passing out musical instruments to the children, be specific about naming the instruments as you give them to each child. In addition, when having the children put the instruments away, be specific about naming the musical instrument as well as its location, “Sarah, put the *tambourine on the bottom shelf.*”

## Create Silly Situations



**Daily Activity:** Circle Time & Reading

**Vocabulary:**

Read Raise hand

Story Illustrator

Cover Describe

Title Beginning

Pages Fiction

Pictures Non-fiction

Author Vocabulary

Puppet Illustrations

**To promote language development...**

Create Silly Situations - Using a book the children have seen before and are familiar with, hold the book upside down and begin reading it to the children. Wait for them to notice, point out, and comment on what you’re doing wrong!

## Provide Opportunities Where Help is Needed



**Daily Activity:** Hygiene & First Aid

**Vocabulary:**

Soap	Medicine	Sick
Sunburn	Scrub	Clinic
Rinse	Emergency	Nurse
Medication	Tissue	Prevention
Paper towel	Physician	Band-Aid

**To promote language development...**

Provide Opportunities Where Help is Needed – Leave the tissue box unopened in your classroom. When a child comes to you with the unopened box, encourage him/her to ask for help opening the box. One way a child might ask for help in this situation is by saying, “Can you please help me open the box?” You can also do the same with an unopened soap bottle in the bathroom.

## Model Desired Responses



**Daily Activity:** Calendar & Weather

**Vocabulary:**

Today	Cloudy	Tomorrow
Windy	Yesterday	Date
Calendar	Days of the week	Year
Season	Months	Holiday
Before	Lightning	After
Temperature	Weather	Decade
Sunny	Humid	Rainy
Overcast		

**To promote language development...**

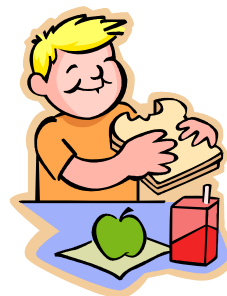
Model Desired Responses - When you ask a child, “What day is tomorrow?,” and the child replies with “Tomorrow Thursday,” you can model the correct response as “Tomorrow *will be* Thursday.”

## Alter Routines

**Daily Activity:** Meal times

**Vocabulary:**

Fork	Hand (pass) out
Spoon	Menu
Knife	Dessert
Plate	Vegetable
Bowl	Delicious
Chew	Nutritious
Napkin	Cafeteria
Hungry	Appetite
Manners	



**To promote language development...**

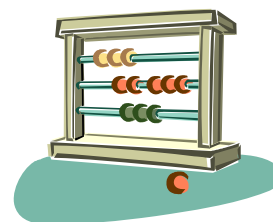
Alter Routines – When providing children with their food and drink, “forget” to give them something that they will need. This could be cups for their juice or spoons for their ice cream. Wait for the children to comment on what you’ve “forgotten” to give them!

## Expand Child's Response

**Daily Activity:** Math

**Vocabulary:**

Shape	Measure	Circle
Pattern	Square	Add
Triangle	Subtract	Rectangle
Cube	How many?	Pyramid
Numbers	Diagonal	Long
Curve	Short	



**To promote language development...**

Expand Child's Response – When working with children on counting, you might ask, “How many ladybugs do you have?” If a child responds with just the number (e.g. “three”), you could expand that utterance by saying, “You’re right, you do have *three black-spotted* ladybugs.” Always make sure to include the child’s response (“three”) when you expand his/her utterance.