

## Foundations in Emergent Literacy Instruction

# Oral Language



The goal of emergent literacy instruction is to teach the building blocks that will, in later grades, provide children the foundation needed to become good readers. Oral language is one of the building blocks.

## What is Oral Language?

Oral language is the system of words and word combinations used to communicate with others through speaking and listening. Oral language is the foundation on which all emergent literacy and later reading is built and supports children's math, science, social, and self-regulation skills.

## What are Effective Instructional Practices for Teaching Oral Language at the Preschool Level?



Frequent, daily language interactions that follow children's interests are the best way to support children's oral language development. Prioritize instruction

that encourages children to talk and that helps them practice syntax, conversation, pragmatics, and listening comprehension. **Syntax** refers to the rules used to put words together to make phrases and sentences. **Pragmatics** is how language is used in social situations. Provide **strategic scaffolds** during all language interactions, such as restate, recast, model using words to describe the child's action, ask open-ended questions, ask thought-provoking questions, and encourage children to think aloud.

Integrate oral language instruction throughout the day using these effective practices:

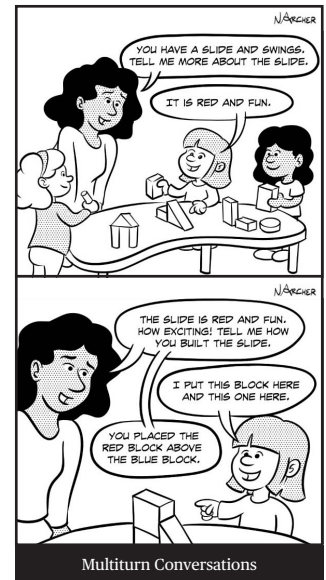
- **Play-based Interactions with Teacher Scaffolding.** For example, use a recast to scaffold the proper use of suffixes. On the playground, a child says, "I jumped highest than you!" The teacher says, "Wow! You jumped higher than me!"
- **Brief Language Interactions.** Embed short opportunities for children to practice using language features, such as prepositions, during daily routines. During transition time, a teacher asks, "Do we have snack *before* or *after* recess?" and children respond.

- **Multiturn Conversations.**

Ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions, encourage **decontextualized language** (describing or explaining past or future events of things not visible at that moment), engage in active listening, and employ ample wait time.

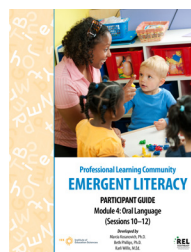
- **Model Language During Conversations.**

Provide intentional responses during conversations using strategic scaffolds. For example, a child says, "The baby is crying." The teacher says, "Maybe the baby is crying because she is tired."



- **Peer-to-Peer Language Interactions.** Help children to share and learn from each other and to foster social skills.
- **Interactive Reading.** Use concrete and abstract comments and questions to facilitate discussion, provide multiple opportunities for children to talk, read familiar books to extend conversation, and increase child participation.

## Learn More



This infographic is part of a suite of materials designed to support early education leaders and providers to build understanding and implement evidence-based instruction in early language and literacy in preschool settings called, *Professional Learning*

*Community: Emergent Literacy*. Explore these materials [here](#).