

Creating a Language-Rich Environment

After reading the previous section on the importance of incidental learning, you may have a new appreciation for the importance of creating a language-rich environment for your child.

What is a Language-rich Environment?

Language-rich environments include the home and the places families visit. The people children spend time with and the activities they do together also contribute to language-rich environments. To make experiences language-rich, parents can create opportunities for communicating with their children. The activity could be anything - the key is how it's done. **Language-rich activities rely on adults nurturing and responding positively to children's communication.**

How can Parents Create Language-rich Environments?

Creating a language-rich environment means turning the television off.

Parents play an important role in their children's language development. Children's brains are wired to learn language; parents can help this process along by providing a variety of opportunities to communicate. **Children learn language more easily when parents talk about what they are doing** (and seeing, touching, tasting, and hearing) as they are doing it. This can occur naturally as you play and do activities together. If parents speak a language other than English, they can do all of these activities in the language of the home.

Research (Walker et al, 2015) with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing showed that televisions serve as a source of background noise, and **parents and children talk less to each other when the television is on** (this applies to the

radio too!). Creating a language-rich environment for children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing means turning the TV off.

A resource to help you create language-rich environments is **Talk Box**. Talk Box was put together by speech-language pathologists to share ideas about creating language-rich environments for preschool (birth to 5 years) and school-age (5 to 12 years) children. **Talk Box shares ideas and activities for creating language-rich environments**. It has everyday tips, information about what to expect in language development, when to get help, and where to get help. This information is shared in newsletters, activity sheets, and information sheets that parents and professionals can access/reproduce from *Alberta Human Services*. <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/talk-box.html>

Another excellent site for ideas about age-appropriate activities is *PBS Parents*: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/>

Adapted from:

-[*Talk Box, Alberta Human Services*](#)

-*Outcomes of Children with Hearing Loss: Results from a Multicenter, Longitudinal Study (Walker et al, 2015)*