



## Self-Talk & Parallel-Talk

Self-talk and parallel-talk are two strategies that help expose your child to spoken language. These strategies require no response from your child. All they have to do is listen! Self-talk is the act of speaking out loud about what you are doing, seeing, hearing, or feeling. Parallel-talk is almost the same as self-talk, except you are talking about what your child is doing, rather than what you are doing.

This is an example of self-talk. The teacher is narrating what she is doing and experiencing as she plays with the toys.

This is an example of parallel talk. The teacher will be narrating what this child is doing and experiencing as she plays with her toys.

Use self- and parallel-talk to expose your child to spoken language. This helps your child see how spoken language can be used in everyday routines. Self-talk and parallel-talk can be very helpful when your child is in unfamiliar settings or learning a new routine. Before your child can speak fluently, their vocabulary needs to increase. This will happen as they continue to listen to spoken language around them. This strategy does not require a response from your child because you are simply exposing them to more spoken language.

Self-talk and parallel-talk are mostly used during the first few years of life when your child is increasing their vocabulary and language skills. As your child starts to understand and use language on their own, your use of self- and parallel-talk will fade away.

When using self-talk, talk out loud about what you are doing. You can tell your child what you are making for dinner, what laundry you are folding, or what groceries you are putting in the cart. You can use self-talk any time you are with your child. Make sure that if you are doing self-talk, you are talking about what you are experiencing, not what the child is experiencing. When using parallel-talk, talk about what the child is doing. Talk about the toys they are playing with, what food they are eating, or what sounds they seem to stop and listen to. If you are doing parallel-talk, make sure to talk about what the child is doing, not what you are experiencing.

Parents and caregivers can use these two strategies at home when going about their daily routines. Teachers and professionals use self- and parallel-talk a lot when they are teaching new information or routines in the classroom.

When your child is very young, self- and parallel-talk are hard to overuse. These strategies will help you build your child's vocabulary and language skills. Around the time your child starts kindergarten, you will notice that your use of self- and parallel-talk will be much less frequent



than when they were younger. This fading of the strategies happens when your child starts to verbally communicate with you more often.

The first step is to identify your reason for wanting to use the self-talk and parallel talk strategies, and the specific issue you would like to work on. For example, to expose your child to more spoken language, increase your child's vocabulary, explain new routines, or explore new settings with your child.

Second, set a SMART goal to help you take the next step. A SMART goal is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and it has a deadline for you to act on your goal.

For example, if your goal is to use the self-talk and parallel-talk strategies, a SMART goal might look like this:

Specific: I want to help my child learn new words

Measurable: I will use the strategy during meal time

Achievable: the goal should be something you feel confident you can do

Relevant: the goal should be relevant to you, for example, I want my child to learn food words so he can tell me what he wants

And Time-bound, you have a deadline for acting on your plan, such as I will use the strategy when we eat together, starting today

Third, think about potential barriers you might experience that could keep you from acting on your goal. For example, do you get distracted or do you have a busy schedule and might this cause you to forget to start using the strategy? Do you need more resources or instruction to help you understand more about using the strategy? Maybe it feels unnatural to you to use the strategy.

Finally, problem solve potential barriers. For example, you can teach family members the strategy so you can support each other, you can incorporate the strategy into everyday activities, you can practice with a friend, or you can discuss your concerns with a professional you trust, such as your speech-language pathologist, early interventionist, deaf educator, or audiologist. This will help you manage challenges more easily if they occur. You can better help your child when you are able to cope with barriers as they arise.