Sentence Repair



One of our most powerful language development tools

There are three types of help we can give children who make mistakes in their sentences when they talk to us:

- **Modelling** - This means saying sentences correctly ourselves. Children get to hear the correct sentence every time we say it. This helps them to learn the correct sentence.
- **Recasting** – Take a sentence that a child has said, then saying it back to them differently.
    - **Correcting** – Fix up a mistake you notice. You might focus on one pattern of mistakes for a while until the child uses it correctly. You might fix up any mistake you notice them making. "The dog runned away" "The dog ran away".
    - **Extending** – add to their sentence or make it more complex. "Look at the dog!" "Yes, look at the brown dog running!"
- **Sentence Repair** – Recast the sentence, and then have the child copy you. This can be done with joy and fun so that the child doesn't become upset. It is a powerful way to help your child with their grammar or vocabulary.

How to do sentence repair:

There are three simple steps to doing sentence repair.

1. Take a sentence that the child has said. You could choose a sentence that is not quite 'right'. You could also choose a sentence that is simple and could be longer. **Recast** the sentence.
    - Correcting grammar: "dog done it" → "yes, the dog **did** it!"
    - Correcting meaning: "I'm riding to the shop" → "we're **driving** to the shop"
    - Extending: "lets go to the park!" → "lets go to the park **so we can play soccer**!"

    You can also do a mix of these.

    Sometimes there will be one type of language that the speech pathologist has asked you to do sentence repair on. Try and focus on this when you are doing sentence repair.

2. Ask the child to repeat your new sentence. This is the **imitation** part.
    - Sometimes the child will be able to do this easily. Move on to step 3!
    - Sometimes it might be too hard for the child to repeat. Repeat just one part of the new sentence. Ask the child to repeat just that part back to you.

      This makes sure they get the success of getting a bit of it right.

      Child: Someone have tied she's lead up in a pole

      Adult (*step 1*): Someone **has** tied **her** lead up **to** a pole. (*step 2*) You say it: Someone <u>has</u> tied <u>her</u> lead up <u>to</u> a pole.

      Child: Someone have tied she's lead up in a pole (*it was too hard!)*

      Adult:

      say: has tied (*simpler task*)

      Child: has tied.

      Adult: Woooo! You did it!

3. Praise and reward the child for trying. Give bigger praise and reward when they get it right! Praise and joy make sure the child wants to keep working on their sentences.

Sentence repair works because it's done in everyday conversation with your child. This helps them learn how to fix up their own sentences. You can do sentence repair in any activities you do with your child.

Research tells us that sentence repair works best when we do it **often**.

It also works best if we focus on **one thing at a time**. If your child has lots of bits of language to work on, do sentence repair on just one bit (or element) of language at a time. For example, you could do sentence repair on pronouns (he, she, her, his) for two months. Then, you could work on action words (e.g. felled → fell, breaked → broke). The speech pathologist working with your child can help you choose what to work on.

When used correctly, the child should start to change their language within two months.

Praise and Rewards

- Sentence repair must be fun and rewarding for the child. If it isn't, they won't do it.
- We want the child to be happy to do this practice. Some children get upset if they are corrected often. You might need to make easier recasts for these children. Sometimes you might need to only do sentence repair for a short time each day. You can also give bigger praise.
- Help the child to always have a go at repeating the recast sentence. If the sentence is too hard, make it easier or shorter.
- Use praise to make sure sentence repair doesn't feel 'naggy' or upsetting to the child.
- Try to say six nice things about the child for each one time you correct a sentence. This 6:1 ratio has been found to help children learn new skills. You could praise other sentences that the child does say well. You could also praise other things you notice them doing.
- Change the praise and rewards you use each time. Random rewards help us learn. Use different social praise and rewards. Sometimes say "well done!". Sometimes give a high-five or thumbs up. Sometimes ring a friend or family member to tell them how great the child's talking is. These fun surprises make the child excited to try to repeat the sentence.
- Using social praise and rewards (like the ones above) is better than rewards like lollies or stickers. Lollies and stickers work well to start with, but over time can make it harder to get the child to do things.

References

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