What are verbal routines?



Verbal routines are one of the simplest and most effective language strategies you can use to get your child saying more words. They are words and phrases that you say the same way, in the same activity, every single time. This helps your child to understand and anticipate the words you're saying.

Think about all the little routines that fill your day: mealtimes, getting dressed, washing hands, turning the lights on, hopping in the car, going for a walk, playing with toys, tidying up, climbing the stairs, or winding down for bed. Each of these daily routines are great opportunities to improve your childs language.

When you say the same words every time during a routine, your little one will start to connect what you're saying with the action or activity you are doing.

For example, you might always say:

- "Shoes on" when putting on your childs shoes.
- "Wash, wash, wash" while they are washing their hands.
- "Up the stairs" as you both walk up the stairs.
- "Night-night" when putting them to bed.

These short, predictable phrases help your little one understand what the words mean, and makes it easier for them to eventually start saying them on their own.

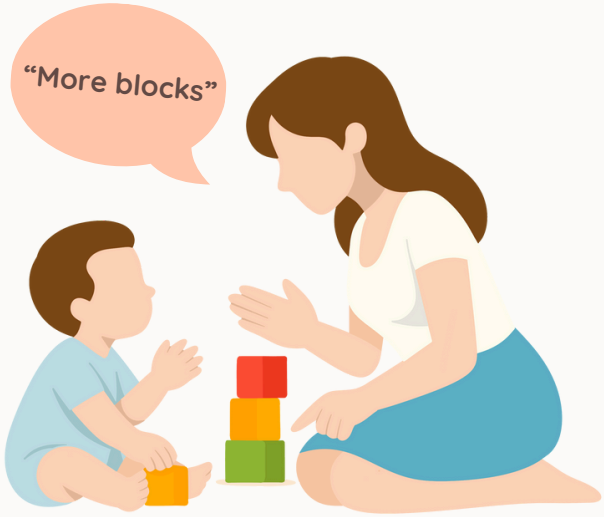
How do verbal routines boost language?

Verbal routines help your child learn language by letting them hear the same words again and again in context. When you use the same phrase during a familiar activity, your child will start to connect the words with what's happening, which is how they understand what they mean. Your little one needs to understand words before they can use them, and verbal routines make that easier by repeatedly using the same words in the same situations.

When to use them

The best time to use verbal routines is during the everyday moments you already share with your child, like brushing their teeth, getting dressed, or during bath time. Because these activities happen the same way each day, they're perfect opportunities to add simple, repeated phrases. And since your day is already full of little routines, you'll have endless chances to build your child's language without adding anything extra to your day.





Using them effectively

Choose a short, simple phrase and say it the same way each time you do a familiar activity with your child. Keep your words consistent and use a cheerful, sing-song tone so your child can start to anticipate what comes next. For example, each time you put on their shoes you might say "shoes on," or when you turn off the light you could say "lights out." Over time, the repetition will help your child connect the words with the action, and eventually, they will start to join in.

Example
verbal routines



Verbal routines during bath time:

On the next page, you'll find six different examples of when you can use verbal routines during bath time with your little one. Each example has four different phrases that you could use at the start of each routine.

The first two phrases for each example are for children who are not yet saying words, or who are only using a few single words. These phrases are shorter and more simple. The last two phrases for each example are slightly longer and more complex. These are best for children who are already saying many single words and are ready to hear longer phrases.

It's important to always meet your child where they're at. If your little one isn't using any words yet, or is only saying single words, using verbal routines that are too long or complex can be overwhelming. Keeping your phrases short and simple gives them the best chance to understand, learn new words, and eventually start saying them on their own.

You don't need to use every example on the next page, even adding just one or two verbal routines into your bath time can make a big difference in helping your child start saying more words. Over time, you can slowly add more routines into different parts of your day. You can also make up your own phrases to use for each verbal routine, just remember to use the same words each time so your child starts to recognise and learn them.

In the upcoming lessons, I'll show you how simple language strategies like verbal routines are the key to boosting your child's language at home. Then, in the final lesson, I'll guide you step by step through how to use these strategies to get your child talking as fast as possible.

Example Verbal Routines

Bath Time

01 Getting in the bath

- “ In the bath ”
- “ Bath time ”
- “ Time to get in the bath ”
- “ One, two, three... In ”

02 Splashing water

- “ Splash, splash splash ”
- “ Big splash ”
- “ Splash the water ”
- “ Splashing in the bath ”

03 Washing your child

- “ Wash, wash, wash ”
- “ Wash time ”
- “ Let’s wash your tummy ”
- “ Time to get clean ”

04 Pouring water

- “ Pour, pour, pour ”
- “ More water ”
- “ Pour the water ”
- “ Here comes the water ”

05 Using shampoo

- “ Shampoo time ”
- “ Wash your hair ”
- “ Time to wash your hair ”
- “ Squeeze the bottle ”

06 Getting out of the bath

- “ Bath finished ”
- “ All done ”
- “ Time to get out ”
- “ The bath is finished ”