TURNING PAGES,
BUILDING FUTURES

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

Worth Echoing

Helping your child turn echoes into their own words.

Short on time? Jump to page 3 for the one-page Narration Planner.

Start Here

This resource is for the parent whose child echoes their exact words — the one who says "you want juice" while reaching for it or repeats a whole movie scene when they don't know what else to say. Echoing is one way children learn and use language. The key is to notice what your child may be communicating and give them useful words to build on.

The big idea: If your child echoes you, give them words worth hearing — and room to make them their own.

We often ask, "Do you want juice?" as we hand it over. A child who echoes may learn to say "you want juice" when they're thirsty, because that's the phrase they heard.

Try modeling the words your child can use for themselves. If they say, "You want juice," respond with, "I want juice." as you hand it over. You can pause to give them a chance to try the phrase, without requiring an echo every time. **It may feel strange at first, but it gets easier with practice.**

Try This: Six ways to talk so echoes can grow

Say what you see

Try: Narrate the moment in short phrases, no questions attached. "You stacked them tall!" "Crash!" "So fast!" Describing - rather than asking - keeps the words coming without putting your child on the spot.

Offer words that fit the moment

Try: When your child reaches for something, offer a brief phrase that fits the situation. Label the item or model a request. "Juice." or "Open it, please." You're making useful language available without requiring your child to repeat it.

Keep it short and meaningful

Try: Keep your language brief and connected to what is happening. "Ball in the box" gives your child a useful phrase they may hear and use in that situation. Follow your child's current communication style and offer a slightly longer model when it fits naturally. The goal is useful language, not perfect grammar.

Stay one step ahead

Try: Match what your child says now, plus a little. If they use single words, two-word models are plenty: "want cookie." If they're stringing words, model three. The next step should feel reachable, not like a leap.

Trade questions for comments

Try: "What's that?" ends the exchange with a test. "That's a big truck!" offers something your child can respond to in their own way. Questions have their place, but during the routines you're practicing, comments keep the door open and reduce pressure.

Respond to what your child means, then model useful language

Try: If your child says, “You want a cookie,” while reaching for one, respond naturally: “I want a cookie!” You can pause to give your child a chance to imitate you. If appropriate, offer a gentle prompt to help them try the phrase. Respond positively to their attempt and let the cookie be the natural result of the interaction. No need to insist on perfect repetition every time.

Pick one routine you’re already in - snack, bath, the drive to school - and try one of these at a time. Your child has been listening to you all along; this is about what they hear next.

What to look for

You don’t need to collect formal data to notice whether something is helping. Over a week or two, watch for:

- ☐ Your child echoing your words - or a piece of them
- ☐ An echoed word showing up in a new moment, used for their own purpose
- ☐ Your child using modeled words in their own way
- ☐ Longer stretches of back-and-forth, even wordless ones
- ☐ Continuing the activity or responding in their own way when you talk

One small change is information - and a place to build from.

If it doesn’t work...

If the words aren’t moving yet, that is not a verdict on your child - it is information. Try:

- If questions get echoed instead of answered, swap them for comments and see what comes back
- If "you want" keeps showing up when your child means themselves, keep recasting - hand the item over with "I want a cookie" and let the pattern settle in
- If your child hands back scripts or movie lines, connect the script to the moment - if the tower falls and they quote a show, say "The tower fell down!" so the words fit right here
- If your child goes quiet when you talk a lot, say less - one model, then wait longer than feels natural
- If nothing is coming back at all, go back to copying your child’s sounds and actions (The Copying Game) - turns come before words
- If you’re not sure what to model, narrate yourself: "I’m pouring. Pour, pour, pour." Your own actions come with free words attached

Remember: *A child who echoes you is handing back exactly what you gave them. Give them words they can keep - said the way they would say them.*

Want more practical ideas?

Get practical, doable strategies for teaching your own child at home - what to try next, how to break it down, and how to make it fit your family's routines. Explore PAGE Resources → Or, if you'd like occasional practical ideas delivered by email, **join the PAGE list at pageaba.com.**

Need help figuring out what to try?

Every child is different. If you're trying strategies at home and aren't sure what to change, PAGE can help you identify practical, individualized ways to support learning, communication, participation, and independence in everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

The Narration Planner

Choose one familiar routine. Try one language model that fits the moment. Pause, notice what happens, and follow your child's lead.

The routine I'll narrate:

What I'll try (circle one to start):

- Say what I see, no questions
- Speak from their side: "I want..." as I hand it over
- Say "My turn!" when it's my turn
- Shorten what I say, but keep it a real sentence
- Match what they say, plus one word
- Answer the echo: hand it over with the words they'd say
- Swap one question for a comment

What happened:

What my child communicated or did:

How I responded:

What I noticed:

This is a note to yourself, not a worksheet anyone will grade.

Say what they'd say. Wait. Say less.