



SpeakEasy Sandbox #4 | Toothbrushing
Mar 16, 2019 | [View this email in your browser](#)

If a friend forwarded you this email, then click here to sign up!

Take a seat in the SpeakEasy Sandbox, where children learn language through play.

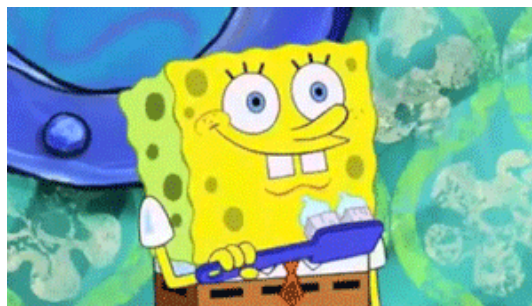
This week, brush up on your language games while brushing your child's teeth.

Let's dig in!

Talking time!
What should I do this week?



This week is all about: **TOOTHBRUSHING**. This daily routine is full of verbs, vocabulary, and practice sequencing events.



Find the right activity card for your child below!

Which activity is right for me? Try the activity best matched to your child's [current language level](#)

When should I do this? These take just a few minutes and can be completed each time you brush your child's teeth.



Remind me later! [Add a reminder to Google Calendar](#)

Pre-verbal

Activity: Oral experiences help your child to become more aware of her/his tongue, teeth, lips and cheeks, to later make speech sounds. Offer a “[baby banana brush](#),” or any other similarly long and stick-shaped soft teether, to help your child have positive oral experiences.

What's next? Speech and feeding are related and require many of the same skills! Once your child is handling some soft mashed textures (8-9 months in typical development), you can try some *always supervised* exploration of long, stick-shaped foods presented to your child's back molars. The goal is NOT to bite off pieces, but just to gnaw and explore in order to increase awareness and practice the tongue movements needed for chewing foods. Examples of good foods for exploration include: whole, peeled carrot (not baby carrots!), frozen melon sticks, frozen french toast strips.

Vocalizer

Activity: Build tongue awareness by sticking out your tongue as you brush it, while saying “ahh ahh ahh”. Brush the sides, too! It may help to model this for your child or show them in the mirror.

What's next? Continue to increase exposure to body awareness and body part vocabulary by “brushing” other parts of your bodies together, or try it on a doll if that is more comfortable for your child.

First word user

Activity: Emphasize verbs (actions) as you get ready to brush. You can “squeeze” the toothpaste, “turn” the faucet, “brush brush brush”, “aaaaand spit!”. Exaggerate each action to increase vocabulary learning.

Not there yet? At this point, your child probably says more nouns than verbs. Look for your child to start to say a few verbs by 24 months. To help increase verb vocabulary, use a visual cue (e.g. a gesture or body movement that represents the word) each time you say a verb.

Word combiner

Activity: Before you put toothpaste on, pretend to start brushing a silly body part, “Ok, time to brush our ears!” Did your child notice that something wasn't quite right? This is a great way to reinforce body vocabulary in a playful way.

What's next? Ask your child what you should brush next. If they don't respond right away, try offering two choices (“Should I brush my ears or brush my nose?”). You would expect them to use 1-2 words in their response (e.g. “brush nose!”), however make sure that you model the full, grammatically correct sentence back to them (“Ok, I'll brush my nose!”).

Full sentences

Activity: Help your child learn basic sequencing by talking about the steps of toothbrushing: “First, we put the toothpaste on, then we brush all our teeth, and last, we rinse.” Try doing the sequence in a silly order or adding a step that doesn't make sense, and see if your child notices.

Not there yet? If your child needs a little more help to follow a routine, try using a visual aid. You can draw or print pictures of the steps for toothbrushing and stick them on the bathroom mirror. Then point to each step as you complete it, to help them associate the language with the visual cue.



Not sure what to do? We'd love to help. [Reply to this email](#) with your question.

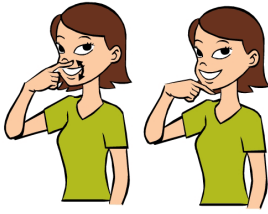


Sensory tip: Toothbrushing can be a very challenging activity for many children. To help your child become more comfortable with this daily activity, you may want to try one or more of the following:

- Let your child know what is coming next by reading books about toothbrushing (like [this one](#)) with her/him.
- Use your finger, [a finger brush](#), or a very small toothbrush with soft bristles.
- Play “My Turn, Your Turn” - First let your child brush your teeth and then you brush hers/his.
- Count to 3 for each section when brushing the top, bottom, right and left parts of the mouth. Say “all done” when finished (and not before). Count very quickly at first (1,2,3!), and more slowly (1...,2...,3...) as your child tolerates the brushing better.

**If your child has extreme difficulty with toothbrushing and/or other sensory activities, consider a consultation with an occupational therapist, the best equipped professional to discuss and evaluate your child's sensory needs in depth.*

Sandbox signs: [Learn the sign for “toothbrush”](#)



Learning time!

Teach me about speech and language



When in doubt, do something unexpected! Routines are great for consistency, but they are also made to be broken. **Breaking the routine** increases language learning by drawing your child's attention and keeping them engaged. They learn more quickly because they take note that something is different. This is why speech therapists love putting toys on their heads and letting them fall, hiding items in unexpected places, or turning books upside down.

Being silly also teaches your child *pragmatic skills* - recognizing what is “typical” social behavior and what is humorous is a great social skill to practice.

Wondering what pragmatics means? Looking for other definitions? Check them out [on our website](#).

Story time!

I want to hear a funny one 😊



In the interest of humor this week, here's a speech therapy joke for you:



(*Who is that?* Chewbacca from Star Wars, Groot from Guardians of the Galaxy, and Hodor from Game of Thrones)

By the way: Is your child at the *Full Sentences* level? You might enjoy trying out a few of [these tooth jokes](#) together to practice the concept of humor.

That's it! Enjoy your digging this week :)



-Kyla and Ken, The SpeakEasy Team

Check out our website!

Please write us! You can [reply directly to this email](#). We would love to answer your personal speech questions on our newsletter, hear and share your funny kid stories, get your suggestions on your own favorite activities, and improve our newsletter based on your feedback.



Share



Tweet



Forward

Our mailing address is:

SpeakEasy Community
843 S Van Ness Apt 1
San Francisco, CA 94110

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

