Help Children Use Language to Think and Learn

Children need to develop the ability to use language for thinking and learning. You can help by having discussions with them that include thought-provoking questions and explanations. Interactions like these encourage children to analyze, reflect and make connections. Here are some playful ways to get children involved in these more complex conversations:
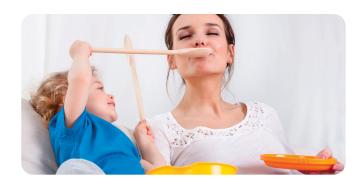
Play Time

When playing in a pretend restaurant, use a comment to introduce a problem for the child to help you solve. If they say, "You want a burger?", you could say, "Yes, I'd really love a burger, but I left my money at home!" Wait for the child to respond and only offer a suggestion if they need help.

Daily Activities

When washing up – whether it's the child's hands, or cleaning paintbrushes after a craft – take the opportunity to offer an explanation. If the child says, "This brush is full of paint," you could respond, "Yes, we have to wash the paint off the brush so that it doesn't dry and get crusty."

On the Go

When you're passing a construction site, if the child says, "That's a big hole!" you could respond with an "I wonder" statement – e.g., "I wonder what they're building there." If they offer an idea ("A house!"), you could say, "Yes, maybe it will be a new house! What do they need to do before they can start building?"

Book Reading

When reading a familiar story, wait for the child to comment on a character's actions. Then, ask whether the character's choice is a good idea. If the child says, "The pig is building a house with straw!", you could say, "Yes, he's building a straw house! Do you think that will be strong enough to keep the wolf out?"

Notes