

Collecting a Conversational Language Sample

What Makes a Great Conversation Great?

- ✓ Targets **past tense, narrative structure, and elaboration**
- ✓ Elicits **who, where, when, what happened, and why**
- ✓ Builds toward **multi-utterance discourse**
- ✓ Avoids yes/no responses
- ✓ Allows **follow-up scaffolding** for expansion

Universal Follow-Up Prompts

These are *gold* for expanding samples:

- “Tell me more about that.”
- “What happened next?”
- “Why did that happen?”
- “How did you feel?”
- “Then what?”

1. Past Tense & Personal Experience (Core Narrative Entry Point)

Starter Questions

- Tell me about something fun you did this week.
- What did you do after school yesterday?
- Tell me about the best part of your day today.
- What did you do last weekend?
- Tell me about a time you got in trouble.

Push for Narrative Detail

- Who were you with?
- Where were you?
- What happened first?
- What happened next?
- How did it end?

 *Clinical Note:* Look for:

- Regular/irregular past tense
- Temporal markers (then, after, later)
- Sentence length and cohesion

2. Full Narrative Elicitation (Story Structure)

Prompts

- Tell me about a time something unexpected happened.
- Tell me about a time you had a problem and had to fix it.
- Tell me about a time you helped someone (or someone helped you).
- Tell me about a time something went wrong.

If Needed (Scaffolds)

- What was the problem?
- What did you try to do?
- Did it work?
- How did you feel?

 *Clinical Note:* Targets:

- Story grammar (setting → problem → attempt → outcome)
- Causal language (because, so, then)
- These questions push toward complete episodes (character, setting, problem, resolution).

3. People (Characters & Relationships)

Builds **descriptive language + social understanding**

Prompts

- Tell me about someone you like spending time with.
- Who is someone funny you know? What do they do?
- Tell me about your teacher.
- Tell me about someone in your family.

Expanders

- What do they look like?
- What do they like to do?
- What makes them special?

 *Clinical Note:* Targets:

- Adjectives
- Relative clauses
- Social language

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4. Place (Setting & Context)

Helps elicit **where + descriptive elaboration**

Prompts

- Tell me about your favorite place to go.
- Describe your classroom.
- Tell me about a place you went recently.
- Where do you like to play?

Expanders


- What does it look like?
 - What can you do there?
 - Who is usually there?
-  *Clinical Note:* Targets:
- Prepositions
 - Spatial language
 - Descriptive vocabulary

5. Time & Sequence (Temporal Language)

Prompts

- Tell me what you do in the morning before school.
- What happens after lunch at school?
- Tell me how your day goes from start to finish.
- What do you do first when you get home?

Expanders


- What happens next?
 - What do you do last?
-  *Clinical Note:* Targets:
- Temporal markers (first, next, last)
 - Verb tense consistency
 - Directly targets **tense + sequencing skills**

6. Problem-Solving & Causal Language

Great for **because, so, if, then**

Prompts

- What would you do if you lost your backpack?
- Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem.
- What do you do when something is really hard?
- What would you do if your friend was upset?

 *Clinical Note:* Targets:

- Conditional language
- Cause-effect relationships

7. Descriptive & Elaborative Language

Pushes beyond basic responses

Prompts

- Describe your favorite game.
- Tell me about your favorite food.
- What is your favorite thing to do outside?
- Describe your perfect day.

Expanders

- Why do you like it?
- What makes it fun?
- What does it look/sound/feel like?

 *Clinical Note:* Targets:

- Adjectives and modifiers
- Sentence expansion

8. Emotional & Internal State Language

Often under-sampled but clinically important

Prompts

- Tell me about a time you felt really happy.
- Tell me about a time you were nervous.
- What makes you feel proud?
- Tell me about a time you were surprised.

Expanders

- Why did you feel that way?
- What happened?

 *Clinical Note:* Targets:

- Mental state verbs (think, know, feel)
- Perspective-taking

Great Resources for Evaluations!

Success with Speech
Sound Disorders

Difference or Disorder?

Developmental
Speech and Language
Norms for Spanish
and English E-book

Working with
Interpreters

Difference or
Disorder? Speech



Difference or Disorder?
Language

