

PARENTS/CARERS

Using Language to Communicate

The way that we communicate our thoughts to others is sometimes called 'Expressive Language'. Whether a child is using words or signs to communicate, the ability to learn and develop 'expressive language' skills is vital.

Many children have difficulties with 'expressive language' which may show in the following ways:
Struggling to remember the right words they need (word-finding difficulties)
Problems putting words in the correct order to make a meaningful sentence
Difficulties telling stories in the correct order
Finding it hard to learn and remember new vocabulary

It can also show through frustrated behaviours if they are unable to get their message across successfully.

Strategies to Develop Expressive Language

Adults around the child can have a really positive impact on the child's development of expressive language.

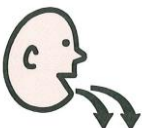
Learning through Play:

- Children learn to link words to objects, actions and concepts through their play. As they explore, imagine, and act out everyday life through play, they learn more about the world around them and how the language they hear relates to it.

How Can I Help?

- Children learn language faster if a friendly and familiar adult plays alongside them. Try to set aside 5-10 minutes each day for you and your child to play together. Turn off the TV or radio, and remove any other distractions for this short time so that you can concentrate fully on interacting with your child.
- Follow the tips below to share your child's interests and use language your child can learn from!

Top Tips for Talking!



- 1. Practise makes perfect.** Repetition is a great way to learn something new or practice it, so don't worry about using the same words over and over, e.g. "oh look it's a bus, a big red bus. The bus is moving..." It will help your child learn!



- 2. Keep it Simple.** Most children can only understand a little more than they can say. So try to talk to your child at their level, building on what they say by adding one or two words, e.g. *Child*: "put shoe", *Adult*: "that's right, put shoe on"



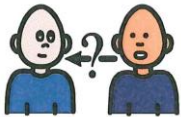
3. **Wait for Me.** It takes children longer to process what you have said to them and to think of the words they want to use. Give them extra time. You might be surprised what they are able to say when they are given more time to think.



4. **Copy Cat.** Imitation is one of the ways that we learn. Children will learn how to copy when adults copy them. Take some time everyday to copy the sounds or words your child makes. Then wait and give your child time to respond or copy you.



5. **Let's Get Interested.** It's difficult to pay attention to more than one thing. This means that if you're talking about something they're not looking at or interested in, they may not be hearing you. Try to make sure distractions are limited when you are communicating with your child.



6. **Be careful with questions.** Children can feel under pressure when fired lots of questions, e.g. "what's this? / how many cats are there? / what colour is this? etc). When adults use comments rather than questions, children join in and talk a lot more, e.g. "look, it's a tiger / there are only 4 cats, maybe there are more dogs / this car is blue")



7. **Screen Time.** Children learn most of their language through play and talking with other people. So if the TV is on, watch it together and talk about what you're seeing. This helps them to learn the words. Children do not tend to 'learn' language by watching TV, especially if they are on their own.



8. **Show them the right way.** If your child makes a mistake when he is talking, praise him for trying and repeat back what he said using the right words and sounds e.g. *Child:* "the dog runned over the road", *Adult:* "yes, the dog ran over the road".



9. **Have fun.** It's great to be with someone who shows you that they enjoy being with you. So when talking and playing with your child have fun with them! Do something you both enjoy. This helps learning a lot.

Activities to Develop Expressive Language Skills

Feely Bag

Put a few objects in a pillow case or bag. Take turns getting items out of the bag. Say the name as you take each item out. Use the same items for several days.

Simon Says

Give your child simple instructions to follow e.g. touch your nose, touch your feet, jump. Let your child have a turn at telling you what to do!

Pretend Shopping

Put a few items of food on the table ask your child to “buy” items from you by asking what he wants.

Sorting

Mix together two groups of items e.g. clothes and some food. Get your child to sort them into two groups naming them as you go.

Lotto games

Play a lotto game. Each time you turn over a card, name it. Encourage your child to do the same.

Treasure hunts

Hide items around the room and get your child to find them! Name each item as you find it.

Ready steady go games

Set up a simple activity for the child to do e.g. knocking over a tower, throwing a beanbag into a box. The child has to wait for the adult to say “ready steady go”. When the child is familiar with this game, give him/her a turn at giving the instruction.

Simple songs (anything simple and repetitive preferably with actions and/or turns):

Wheels on the bus

Head, shoulders, knees and toes

Wind the bobbin up

Row row row your boat

Ring a ring of roses

More!

Play anything exciting that the child enjoys that is quick and needs repeating. Do the activity a few times and then ask the child if they want "more?" Encourage the child to ask for "more".

Games could include: blowing bubbles, knocking down and rebuilding towers, marbles down a marble run, making a toy (or the child) go down a slide/swing, knocking down skittles, songs, puppet on a stick (the kind that disappears into a cone), toys that you let go and they wind down a stick. It can also be done with food e.g. raisins, small sweets, small pieces of apple, popcorn (make sure it's something they like). Only give them a very small amounts and get them to ask for “more”.

Roll the ball

Roll a ball from you to a child and then get them to roll it back or onto another child. Once they can do this easily get them to say their name when they get the ball.

Up and down games

Pick the child up and say "up". The child will soon get the idea and start asking to go "up" by using a gesture or the word. Alternatively, attach a piece of string to a doll. The child says "up" and you pull the string up and the doll moves up. This is even more interesting if the string is wound round something so it acts as a pulley.