

Child and Young People's Integrated
Therapies (CYPIT)

Early Years Speech and Language Therapy



Information Pack for
Early Years Settings

2nd Edition

Contents

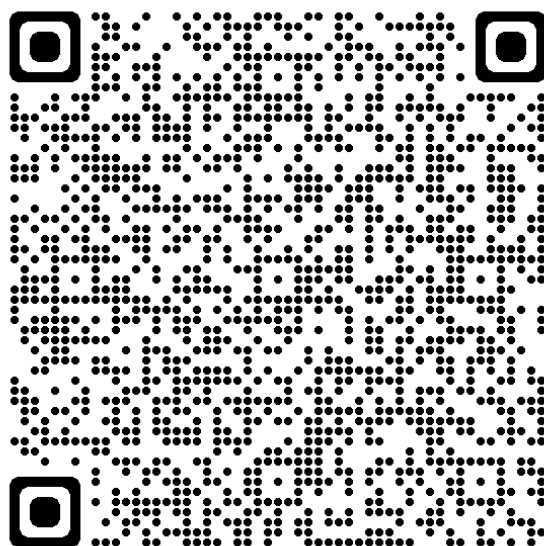
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Early Years Speech and Language Therapy Service

This pack includes information on specific strategies and activities that you can use in your setting to help all children to develop their speech, language, and communication needs and also to provide extra help to a child who may be struggling.

For more information about the children, young people and families (CYPF) services, and to stay updated with service changes, please visit our website:

<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/children-and-young-peoples-integrated-therapies/speech-and-language-therapy/>



Developmental Norms

What is 'typical' development?

Children's development usually follows a known and predictable course of acquisition of skills and abilities. Although not all children reach every developmental milestone at the same time, there is an expected timeframe for reaching these developmental markers.

It is important to be aware of what is typical in each area in order to identify when children may be displaying skills that are developing outside of the expected time frame, are emerging in a different way, or following a different developmental pattern to what would be typically expected.

What to expect?

There are many useful resources available which outline typical developmental stages.

Below are some useful web links and resources to gain more information about what to expect.

ICAN Ages and stages information from 0-17 years

- <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/parents/ages-and-stages/>

Communication Trust 'Universally Speaking' (0-5 years)

- <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/universally-speaking/>

Communication Trust 'Communicating the Curriculum'

- <https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/communicating-the-curriculum/>

What might we see?

Children can present with difficulties or delays in one, or several areas of their development.

The 'Bercow: Ten Years On' (2018) report explains that 10% of children have a long-term speech, language, and communication needs. This is around 2-3 children in every classroom.

See the report summary here: <https://www.bercow10yearson.com/>

In some areas of the country, over 50% of children are starting school with delayed communication skills. Their speech may be unclear, vocabulary is smaller, sentences are shorter, and they are able to understand only simple instructions. Many of these children can catch up with the right support.

Children with poor vocabulary skills at age 5 are more likely to have reading difficulties as an adult, more likely to have mental health problems, and more likely to be unemployed. Find out more at: <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/language-as-a-child-wellbeing-indicator>

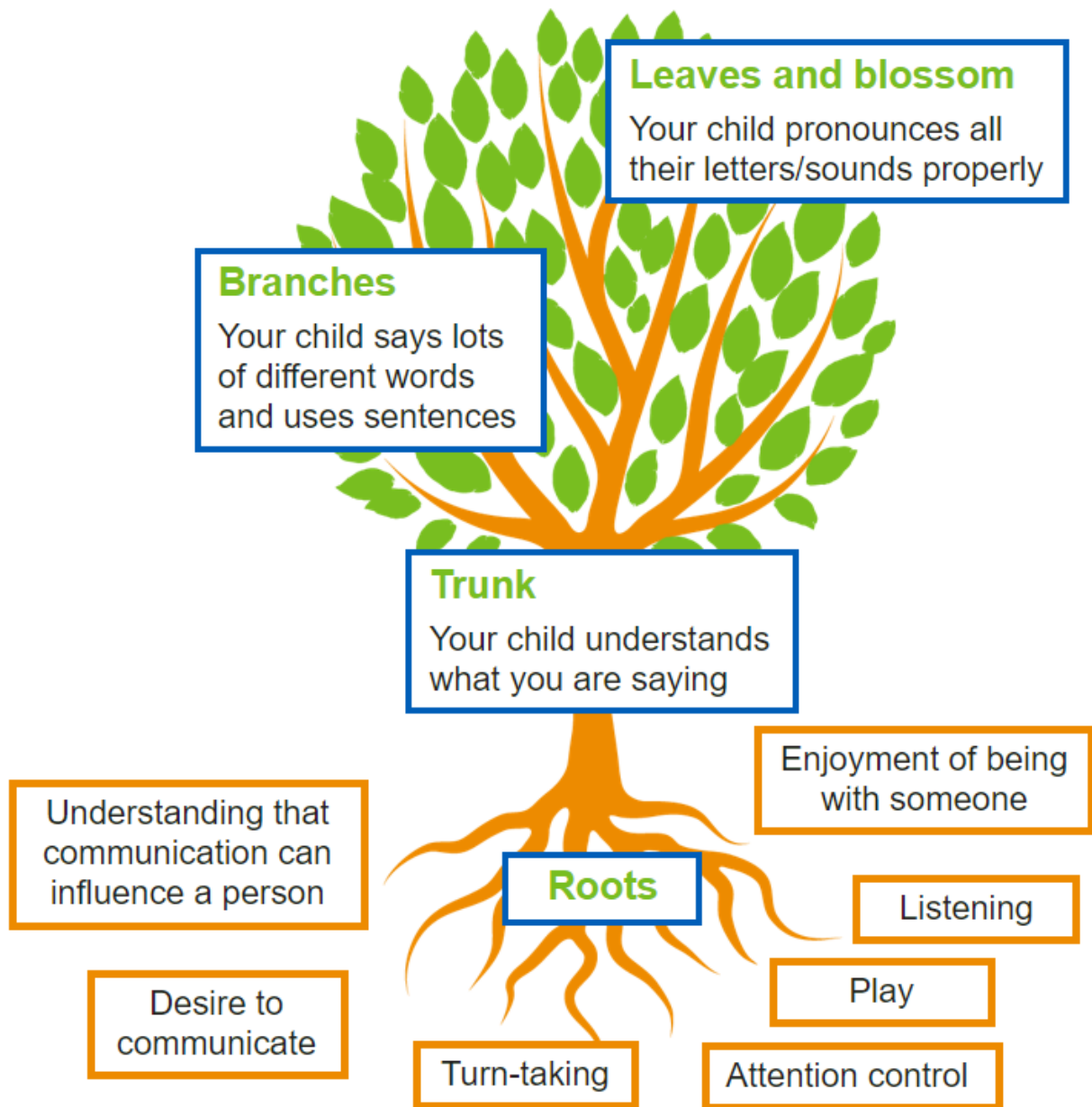
It is important that we work together to identify children who may be struggling and provide the support they need as quickly as possible. To find out more about 'What I might see' and 'How to help' visit <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/support-and-advice>

Building Communication

Children learn to communicate through experiencing to-and-fro interactions with others.

Communication is complex and consists of many different skills.

We use the Communication Tree to break communication down, and to highlight how early interaction skills lead to the development of more advanced language skills. Development starts with the foundations of communication at the roots of the tree and grows upwards. The speech sounds (a child speaking clearly) is 'the blossom on the tree' and all the other skills need to develop first.



Bilingualism

A bilingual speaker is someone who is exposed to or speaks two or more languages (multilingual). Bilingualism is normal. All over the world millions of people are brought up to speak two or more languages as part of their natural way of life. A child who is brought up in a bilingual background is not required to do anything especially unusual or difficult.

- Children can become conversationally fluent in any language within two to three years, but it takes five or more years for children to be able to use the academic/specific language that is needed for school. It is therefore very important that you find out how long a child has been exposed to a language and consider what the expectations are.
- Children learning English as an additional language are as able as any other children, and the learning experiences planned for them should be no less challenging.

What you may see or experience

What is normal?

Bilingual children develop language through a series of stages

- **Words:** Initially a child develops an understanding of words e.g. bed' (= 'sleep in it'). Then they develop a name 'label' (vocabulary), which might include names of objects from all the languages the child hears.
- **Sentences:** When making sentences, children use rules to help them put the words together. A bilingual child initially only has one set of rules. The child may mix the two languages within the same sentence. This is a natural stage and happens most when they are not really aware yet that they are learning two languages. They will soon work out the different vocabulary and rules of the two languages.
- **The final stage** develops when the child separates the vocabularies and rule systems for the two languages.

(Information provided by: www.bilingualismcen.com)

What is cause for concern?

If the child is demonstrating difficulty learning and using their first (home) language, they may require support from a speech and language therapist. Speech and language therapy does not offer support for children who have age-appropriate language skills in their first language but are demonstrating difficulty learning English as an additional language. We find that children who demonstrate difficulty learning English as an additional language can be well supported by language enrichment strategies within the nursery/preschool setting.

How you can help/what you can do

- ✓ Supporting the development of the home language will enhance the learning of English, therefore:
 - It is okay for children to speak in their home language when they are at their nursery.
 - It is okay for children to mix English and their home language in one sentence.
- ✓ Modelling is important for introducing children to new language structures and vocabulary. Children need to hear language used in context before they can rehearse and use it themselves.
- ✓ Questions should be used with great care – avoid using questions such as 'What is this?' or 'What colour is this?' too often. By using questions, we are testing children's knowledge rather than supporting them to extend their use of language. Instead, comment and talk to the child alongside their play. For example, if a child is drawing a picture, rather than asking 'what are you drawing?' you could comment 'you're

drawing a picture of a beach, I like going to the beach'. See if the child responds to your comment and uses their own sentence.

- ✓ If a child makes an error in their sentence, model back the correct use of the structure to them. For example, if the child says 'we *wented* to the park', you can model back 'wow, yesterday you *went* to the park'.
- ✓ Give the child time to listen and respond, become familiar with the language and adapt to the nursery routine.
- ✓ Additional visual support is helpful for children learning English and using real objects, photos and pictures can also support and enhance the learning experiences of all children.
- ✓ Many children go through a 'silent period' when learning a new language; this may last for several months but is not usually a cause for concern. The child is getting used to hearing new words and being immersed in a new language. Children will usually understand far more than they can say.
- ✓ Encourage parents to continue to talk to their child in whichever language feels most natural to them. That way they will be providing a natural, fluent model of how to talk. What is important is the quality of the language a child hears not which language it is.
- ✓ Songs and rhymes, with plenty of repetition, are often learnt quickly and are a good source of language. Simple songs, rhymes and refrains chanted in a rhythmic way are often the vehicle for children's first attempts to articulate an additional language. Sharing songs and rhymes in home languages reinforces similarities in patterns of languages and fosters home to setting links. Parents and bilingual staff can help translate favourites such as 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' as well as sharing traditional rhymes and songs.
- ✓ Encourage parents to read books to their child in their home language. Stories are a great way to support children in learning new words and the sentence structure of a language.
- ✓ There is considerable evidence that learning to speak and use more than one language can benefit children's overall academic and intellectual progress.

How you can help/what you can do

If there are concerns about a bilingual child's communication in their first language, please talk with parents about how the child is using their language at home and if they are demonstrating difficulty using their first language.

If the child is demonstrating difficulty understanding and using their first language and does not appear to be developing their language skills as you would expect, please consider seeking support from the speech and language therapy team.

Further Resources

NALDIC: Primary National Strategy: Supporting Children learning English as an additional language <https://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsquidance.pdf>
The Centre of Literacy and Multilingualism: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/celm/>
Bilingualism Matters: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/celm/bilingualism-matters/>
Bilingualism London Clinical Excellence Network: <https://www.bilingualismcen.com/>

Three to four years	Home language development		
Play and social skills	Listening and understanding	Talking	Bilingual considerations and strategies
<p>Three to four years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative play (uses an object or prop as if it were something else eg pretends that a banana is an aeroplane). <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys playing with peers and initiates conversation. 	<p>Three to four years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hears you when call from another room. <input type="checkbox"/> Hears television or radio at the same loudness level as other family members. <input type="checkbox"/> Understands simple, who, what, where, why questions. <p>Attention skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Two-and-a-half year olds can only attend to one thing at a time. Difficult to incorporate adult instructions. Can attend to adult's choice of activity for increasing periods. 	<p>Three to four years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Talks about activities at school or at friends' homes. <input type="checkbox"/> By three years old the child's speech should be clear and understood by most strangers. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses a lot of sentences that have four or more words. <input type="checkbox"/> Usually talks easily without repeating syllables or words. <input type="checkbox"/> Experiments with grammar ie runned. <input type="checkbox"/> Some speech sounds may not be developed for example v, s, z, j, sh, ch, j, r & th. <p>Vocabulary size</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 500 to 1000. 	<p>New to English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children go through a silent period initially – don't force them to speak, but keep talking to them! Make short comments on what they are doing (ie "Samira you're feeding your doll, yum, yum. She's hungry"). • They make contact with other children but may not speak. • Use visual cues (facial expression, gesture, signs, symbols, pictures etc) to support verbal message. This can help support and link languages across home and school. • Introduce other children who speak the same language. • Ask for a list of 20 commonly used words at home in their language (write these phonetically to help your pronunciation). • Keep your language simple and context bound. Shorten your instructions and use familiar vocabulary. • Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories. • Invite parent in to read/sing in their own language. • Using a bilingual worker – allow opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language. • Don't insist on the child talking; give them time to hear the new language.
			<p>Developing bilingual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simultaneous bilingualism can be slightly slower as the child is processing two words for things. Six months delay is normal. • Sing rhymes and repetitive short stories. • Regularly observe/record the child's developing use of English, including non-verbal gestures. • Make sure to give time to listening and responding – allowing for him to take longer to put his words together. • Note different cultures will influence the way in which children's abilities to negotiate and bargain are encouraged. • Encourage generalising new vocabulary to their home language so as to avoid any subtractive effect on the home language. • Repeat new words in different contexts and use play to help development of concepts; up, top, apart, toward, hard, same, empty, around, in front, high, back of, next to, light, slow, different, little, full, more, less. • Be aware that their home language may not have the same grammatical structures, eg Turkish does not have pronouns, so they may be difficult to acquire in English. • Model English by repeating what they have said and adding one to two words to extend their language. • The child may start to code switch ie use some English and some home language in the same sentence. Code switching is normal and can express change in intimacy or emphasis. • Using a bilingual worker – encourage and give opportunity for role-play using their home language. Make opportunities for the child to ask questions and express thoughts and feelings in their home language. • Give opportunity for him/her to speak with other children in their home language. • Look for opportunities to praise use of both languages. • Give the child opportunities for interpreting possibly for another child/family.

Taken from: Considerations for children in their early years with English as an Additional Language-
www.gosh.nhs.uk/cypbh

Communication Friendly Environments

What is a communication friendly environment?

A communication friendly environment is one that promotes and supports children's language and communication skills. It is a term used to describe key features of the environment, and the way adults/practitioners within the environment interact with children.

The 'Better Communication Research Programme' (2012) looked at how education environments can support children's language and communication.

What does it cover?

A communication friendly environment should consider factors involving:

- The language learning environment
- The role of the adult in supporting language interactions
- The opportunities available for supporting language interactions



The Environment

The communication environment should have:

- ✓ Cosy, quiet spaces that provide different experiences and areas to communicate e.g., areas for working 1:1, and in small groups.
- ✓ Minimal background noise. Music or songs in the background can make it more difficult for children to listen and focus their attention. Can everyone hear and be heard?
- ✓ Signs, symbols, photographs and writing. Resources may be labelled to help children be more independent in accessing what they need, and to encourage independent organisation skills. How widely and consistently are these used? Are parents shown how these work?
- ✓ Clear and consistent routines – how does the environment help the children know what to expect, and when?
- ✓ Opportunities to have experiences to talk about their thoughts and ideas. Children are more likely to engage in conversation when they are interested or excited by what they are doing. They should have opportunities to have new experiences and learn new words.
- ✓ Open ended activities that are accessible for children of all language levels.
- ✓ An 'asking friendly' attitude where children are encouraged to seek clarification where required e.g. 'please say that again', or 'what does.....mean?'.
- ✓ Opportunities to engage in structured conversations with peers.

What can adults do?

There are many key strategies that adults can implement, which help children to develop their language and communication skills. These strategies can be introduced throughout the normal nursery environment, whilst you talk and play with the children. You may already be using many of

these strategies; however, it is useful to think about which strategies you use consciously and consider how you could introduce different strategies with different children.

- ✓ Follow the child's interests – children will often stay at their own activities for a longer period of time. You can show that you are listening, and enjoying their activity, demonstrating your interest in what they say and do.
- ✓ Join their play – children will often stay at their own activity for a longer period of time. You can show them your interest in what they are doing, and how they are playing. By joining a preferred activity, you may gradually be able to model language to expand vocabulary, model how else we may play with this activity, and try taking turns and sharing toys together.
- ✓ Model language – children learn words best when they hear them in context. You can model words based upon what the child is doing, when they are doing it e.g., 'red car', 'you're climbing the ladder'. This is also a good way to introduce new vocabulary, so the child can apply it to an appropriate context or situation. Also, remember, repetition, repetition, repetition!
- ✓ Pause – sometimes children may need a little longer to process, understand, and respond to what we have said. Try to provide children around 10 seconds to communicate back to you. This will also help show the child that you have time to facilitate their communication attempts, rather than them feeling rushed or under pressure to respond.
- ✓ Break down instructions – children may need instructions to be broken into smaller steps, so they can focus on one instruction at a time. Their ability to follow instructions may also be impacted by distractions within the environment, or by their understanding of the words that you use.
- ✓ Check they have understood – this enables the adult to gauge whether or not a child has listened and understood what has been said, but also provides the child with an opportunity to seek clarification if it is required. Questioning when not understanding should always be encouraged.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for children to work together – structuring games with peers, having talking partners, or working within small, structured groups enables children to practice their turn-taking and social interaction skills. Together, children may have to problem solve, and overcome communication breakdowns. Children may initially need adult support with this, before being able to do so independently.

The benefits

A communication friendly environment should make communication easy, effective, and enjoyable!

This will provide support for children with speech, language, and communication difficulties, enhance communication development universally, and remove barriers to communication. This in turn, will support learning, and social and emotional development.

Audit Tools

There are some audit or assessment tools available for settings to self-assess their environment to identify what is going well, and how they can make adaptations to improve their communication friendly environment.

Please see the following sites below, to find example checklists available for download.

The communication supporting tool:

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/for-professionals/the-communication-trust/more-resources/communication-friendly-checklists/>

There is a specific programme called Communication Friendly Spaces which was developed by Elizabeth Jarman. Further information can be found at: <https://elizabethjarman.com/>

Creating Opportunities to Communicate

Creating opportunities for communication

If a child is able to access everything by themselves then they do not have a **NEED** to interact with those around them. If rather than coming to an adult to ask for help they can achieve this independently there is a missed opportunity for interaction and communication.

Below are general communication strategies that will benefit ALL children, and therefore can be implemented within a whole nursery environment.

Setting up a communication environment is key to developing a child's communication skills.

What does this involve?

- Do not anticipate needs, allow the child to ask for things that they require
- Don't be too quick to offer assistance, allow the child time to problem solve for themselves and request help as and when they require it
- Ensure that not all things are freely available to the children



How to create communication opportunities within the nursery environment for all children:

- ✓ Do not anticipate needs, for example if a task / activity requires certain equipment perhaps let the children collect this for themselves – or work out what it is they need and/or are missing.
- ✓ Approaching a child to ask if they need help does not allow them to initiate an interaction. Instead you could initially stand near by the child to see if they need help, or use some non-verbal cues if the child is really struggling – e.g. holding your hand out towards them. Gradually you may be able to move further away from the child and find that they can come to you/ raise their hand for help.
- ✓ Whilst there might be times when you wish for children to have a free choice over the activities they can access, you should try to create times when these are not as easily accessible, e.g. certain stationery items may be out of reach, or certain activities may be in boxes that are not as easily accessible by the child themselves.
- ✓ Create pauses in familiar routines, for example when discussing getting ready for lunch e.g. 'first we line up to go and wash our...' – leave the gaps for children to fill in. This can also be done with nursery rhymes and songs, pause and leave gaps – you may find that the child does not initially respond – in which case you can complete the gap yourself.

Using Sabotage & Withholding to entice the child to communicate

Some children may require more specific opportunities to be created for them in order to encourage communication.

Withholding

Purposefully keeping something away from a child until they say the word (or signs/gestures)

Sabotaging

Setting up situations/problems so that a child needs to communicate with you to get what they want.

Give your child food in packaging they can't open, or put a favourite item in a transparent, hard-to-open container



Give them their food without cutlery, or with the wrong cutlery



Give them the iPad/phone without entering the passcode

Give them a marble run without the marbles, or set up a racetrack, but don't provide cars



Give them a battery-operated toy without the batteries, or give them a wind-up toy without winding it up first



Put their favourite toy on a high shelf, out of reach



5 steps to using 'Sabotage':

1. Work out what the child is motivated by! This might be food, games such as tickles/peek-a-boo, a toy, a comforter, the garden.
2. Sabotage in some way (see the examples above) e.g. so the child can see the item but is unable to access it.
3. Wait for the child to notice the error and look at them expectantly. Be available but don't jump in! They may come towards you or make eye contact, take your hand or point at the item.
4. Wait a few seconds longer to give them the opportunity to use/sign the desired word before saying/signing the word for them e.g. 'help!'
5. Respond immediately by providing the item/activity (even if they didn't use the word themselves)

Repeat this on multiple occasions, always waiting for the child to show you they need help and leaving a pause for them to say/sign the desired word before you model it for them.

Top Tips for success:

- ✓ Approach the situation with a FUN attitude.

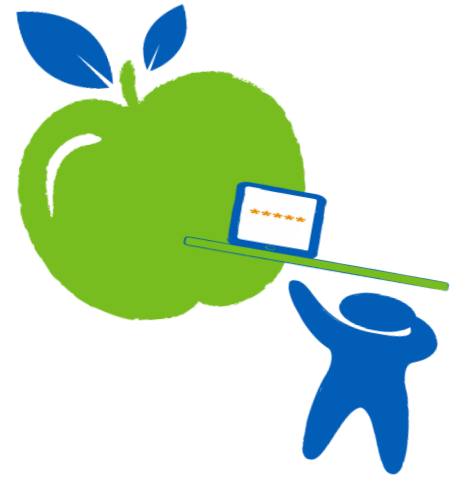
- ✓ If the child becomes genuinely upset, stop the game and provide them with the item.
- ✓ If the child gives you a word or “try” that is acceptable, but not perfect, reward the effort - When you reward the effort, they are likely to try again.
- ✓ Don't overuse sabotage so that they feel like they shouldn't even try.

Offering Choices

Choices are a great way of providing opportunities for children to communicate. They also help to give children independence by showing us what they want or what they do not want.

How to offer a choice

1. Start by offering the child a choice of two items. Offer one item you know the child wants and one that is less motivating, e.g. “do you want a yoghurt or an apple?”
2. Hold the items a little way apart and look for how the child responds. They may look, reach, point, sign or say the item they want.
3. When the child can choose between these items, offer a choice of two items they might want, e.g. “do you want an apple or banana?” or two items that are less motivating, e.g. “do you want red socks or blue socks?”
4. When you have observed how the child makes their choice you can encourage them to use the next stage, e.g.
 - If they are looking, help them to reach
 - If they are reaching help them to point
 - If they are pointing encourage them to sign or say the word



When to use choices

Choices can be used in every part of the daily routine and during play.

Here are a few examples:

- Snack times, e.g. “do you want yoghurt or apple?”
- Story Time – offer a choice of books
- Play – offer a choice of toys

Note: A child may not always respond to verbally to these communication opportunities, instead they may use signs/ gestures/ point/ reach or grab towards what it is they want. This is then the opportunity for you to provide the child with the language they need e.g. ‘help please’, ‘want bricks’. You can base the language you model at the level appropriate to the individual child.

Screen Time

Some experts believe that young children should not be exposed to screens, including computers, tablets smartphones and TV as they are not beneficial for this age group.

For young children, learning is best supported through interactions with adults, so adults should try to find time to share these activities. If you do choose to share some screen time with your child, here are some ideas for helping it to be a shared experience, a talking point, and an activity with boundaries.

What is screen time?

Screen time refers to any time spent looking at a screen.

Common 'screens' used include tablets (iPad), mobile phones, computers and TV. These screens may be used for a variety of different activities, including watching TV programmes, watching YouTube videos, looking at pictures, watching nursery rhymes, and playing games.



What is the risk?

Children learn best from real life experiences and social interactions. Screen time reduces the opportunities for this.

- Less time for real life learning and interactions between the child and others e.g. reading books, play.
- Having TV on in the background can disrupt young children's play and be distracting.
- TV moves very quickly – real life often has a slower pace, supporting a child's understanding and attention.
- Screens do not respond to the child's communication attempts to reinforce or provide feedback for their learning.

Choosing activities for the child

Choose games, apps and programmes developed for the child's age.



Quality is important, too. Many apps are labelled as 'educational' but will need checking for their quality and content, so adults should spend time of these themselves, before the child.

Look for apps or programmes that:

- Have a clear and specific age range.
- Make the child laugh.
- Give the child achievable goals.
- Encourage others/caregivers to join in.

Top tips for screen time

Be a good role model

Adults should try to limit their own use of screens, particularly with children around, for example, turning off the TV if no-one is watching, and putting phones away until after children are asleep.

Limiting screen time

Limit the time you and your child spend in front of the screen - some guidance suggests a maximum of 20 minutes. Young children need to be active to grow healthily. Time spent on screen means the child is not walking, running, climbing and exploring their environment.



Make screen time shared time

Watch, interpret and play with the child as you share the screen together. That way, you can draw the child out, just as you do when **reading** a book. By doing so, you will help them to build vocabulary and memory skills. It also means they get to spend enjoyable time with those around them.

Opportunity to see other children playing, and involved in routines

Some children particularly benefit from programmes that include real children and their real-life experiences as part of the story/episode, rather than cartoons that might be very visually stimulating, but with language models and experiences in it that are less meaningful, or intended for slightly older children.

Focus on fun

The child should see the screen as just one sort of activity that might be fun. Do not assume that learning opportunities are best linked to screen time. Instead, if you want to focus on learning, go for games and activities that foster general early learning skills. These might include listening and understanding, cause and effect, opposites, and colour and shape recognition. The child will stay enthusiastic about learning if skill-building is incidental to a good story, song or game.

Family photos

Talk about family photos that you can look at on the screen or photos that show a sequence of something you did together. These can be a great talking point and help children to start to relate early experiences and enjoy sharing activities that were fun again.

Simple songs

From birth, babies enjoy songs and music with a steady rhythm and sing-song tone. And by the time they are a year old, repetitive song, such as Old MacDonald Had a Farm, help children to understand patterns. They can also start to anticipate what will come next. Screen time can sometimes help the adults learn some new and interesting rhymes (so can Library rhyme times!)

Further Resources

www.nhs.uk Search 'Guidelines issued on activity and screen time for babies and toddlers'

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies Search 'TV and screen time for toddlers.'

<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/> for a list of apps approved by the Department of Education.

Attention and Listening



Attention and listening are important skills within the foundation of communication development.

Listening

Listening is the ability to filter between different noises that we hear, to ‘tune in’ to sounds that are important. This is not the same as hearing.

We will hear many different sounds around us within our environment, but we do not listen to them all. Often, we are able to ‘tune out’ sounds that we do not need to listen to, or can be ignored, for example, when walking in a park talking to a friend, you may be able to ‘tune out’ the noise of leaves rustling or birds singing, in order to focus on listening to their voice. Children need to learn to filter out sounds that are not needed, and to ‘tune in’ to sounds that are needed. Listening is an active process, which is key to effective communication.

Attention

Attention is the ability to concentrate on one aspect of your surroundings, whilst ignoring other elements. It also involves the ability to listen for increasing periods of time.

Children can have varying levels of attention. Initially, children are able to focus on one thing at a time. However, as their skills develop, they are able to shift their attention from item to item. Children’s activity levels fluctuate depending on the activity. If it is something they have chosen, they may be able to attend for ages. However, less motivating activities chosen by someone else are going to be harder for children to engage with. You may also find that children are able to focus better in a 1:1 situation, or with an adult, compared to when within a group of other children.

If children struggle with listening and attention skills, it may impact upon their ability to develop and extend their play, join in with others, develop language, and to engage in learning opportunities.

Activities to develop attention and listening

Listening Walks

Take children to different areas around the nursery/preschool setting e.g. the hall, the corridor, the playground. Talk about the different noises that they can hear. Try getting the children to close their eyes and point to the direction a sound is coming from.

Ready, Steady, Go

Play games that require the child to listen for ‘go’ before the game/action continues. This may include, knocking down a tower, rolling a ball, pushing a car down a track, playing musical instruments, and chasing games. You can model the language “ready, steady, go” and see what the child’s reaction is. Look out for the child anticipating “go” or see if they are communicating “go” in any way.

Remember, to accept any form of communication e.g. if the child is unable to verbally say “go”, accept eye contact, tapping, vocalisation, gesture etc. When the child engages well with ‘ready, steady, go’, try to increase the time between ‘steady’ and ‘go’ to build up the child’s attention and listening skills.



Nursery rhymes and action songs

Sing familiar or repetitive songs where the child must listen to follow actions involved e.g. “wheels on the bus” and “head, shoulders, knees and toes”. You may choose to sing these in different ways e.g. quietly, loudly, fast, slow, to see if the child is paying attention and listening to the changes.

Musical Instruments

Encourage the child to copy your rhythm, or vary how you play the instruments e.g. quietly, loudly, fast, slow. You can also play a hidden instrument and get the child to point to a picture of the instrument they think they heard.

Simon Says

Simon says can be played with a group of children, initially following all of the instructions given, and then introducing the ‘Simon Says’ element. Children must listen out for ‘Simon Says’, in order to complete the instruction.

Attention Autism

Attention Autism is an intervention model designed by Gina Davies, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist.

Attention Autism aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. Whilst this program was initially created for children on the Autism Spectrum, it is beneficial for any child with attention or communication difficulties.

Stages of Attention Autism

The Attention Autism programme progresses through a series of stages, building on each skill level. Each new stage is introduced when the group is ready to expand their attention skills. Gina Davis’s primary objective is that the sessions are fun and “offer an irresistible invitation to learn”! Attention Autism principles can then be generalised to curriculum activities (e.g. literacy and numeracy) to facilitate learning and skill development.

- **Stage 1: The Bucket to Focus Attention.**
A bucket is filled with visually engaging objects and toys, aiming to gain the shared attention of the group. The adult leader shows each item to the group and uses simple repetitive vocabulary to comment on the various objects.
- **Stage 2: The Attention Builder.**
Visually stimulating activities are demonstrated to the group by the adult leader, aiming to sustain the group’s attention for a longer period. The activities are fun, visually engaging and can often involve delightful mess!
- **Stage 3: Turn taking & Re-engaging Attention.**
The adult leader demonstrates a simple activity, often modelled with another adult in the group. Some children are then invited to have a turn but only if they are comfortable to do so. Not every child in the group will get a turn, which then teaches important emotional regulation skills, as well as the essential skills of waiting, turn-taking and learning through modelling.
- **Stage 4: Shifting & Re-engaging Attention.**
Stage 4 aims to develop the skill of controlling and shifting attention. The adult leader demonstrates a

simple creative task, and then gives each child an individual kit to copy the task. The children take their kits to a table, complete the task independently, and then everyone returns to the group to show their completed tasks.

Please see Appendix for summary on Attention Autism stages.

Further Resources

Please see <http://ginadavies.co.uk/parents-services/professional-shop/> for further information, and training courses. She can also be found on Facebook, and YouTube for video examples as 'Gina Davies Autism Centre.' <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPPw7lj3k2Zhe19Fb3CO-ag>

Environmental Strategies

Reducing distractions

There are several factors within the child's environment that can be distracting and can make it difficult for children to focus their attention. Aim to minimise these, to create an environment where it is easier to attend and listen.

- ✓ Reduce background noise. Some children may need a quiet area to focus on their work.
- ✓ Consider seating. Some children may attend better when sat next to the adult speaking. If sitting by a window, children may be distracted by birds, rain or other children outside. Whilst sitting near the door, children may be distracted by the noise from other classes or children in the corridor.
- ✓ Consider the lighting. There may be a flickering computer screen, a faulty flickering light, or the light may be reflecting on a white board, which can be distracting. Try to avoid talking to children with the light behind you, as this makes it more difficult to see your face.

Supporting Attention within the setting

- ✓ Call the child's name to gain their attention before giving an instruction or spoken information.
- ✓ Encourage the child to look at you when you talk to them, by getting down to their level. This does not necessarily mean eye-contact. For some children, having to make eye-contact can be too overwhelming, and may prevent them being able to focus and listen.
- ✓ Use your voice, facial expression, and gestures to keep their interest. Using an animated voice can make words sound interesting and keep a child's interest for longer.
- ✓ Use simple sentences and emphasise key words.
- ✓ Build joint attention by joining activities that the child has chosen. Follow their lead and their interests, as these activities will likely sustain their attention for longer.
- ✓ Have realistic expectations of the child's attention. If they currently attend for around 2 minutes, you cannot expect them to attend an activity for 10. Start where they are at, and gradually build activity length to increase their attention.
- ✓ Allow children suitable learning and/or movement breaks.
- ✓ Use visual/auditory timers to show how long a task will last for before moving on to the next task.
- ✓ Vary the activity to maintain attention – alternate listening with doing. As a rule, don't expect children to sustain listening for more than 10 minutes, without doing, thinking or talking about something so that they are actively involved in the learning.



- ✓ Use visual support to provide clear guidelines of what is expected. Set clear and achievable expectations for each task in the setting.
- ✓ Use visual timetables (pictured) to demonstrate the structure of the day. This can be used at home and at nursery/preschool. Reinforce the activity schedule by referring back to the timetable throughout the day and encourage children to make independent use of this to remind them what is coming next in the day.
- ✓ Use individualised task planners to break down tasks with multiple steps. Use a visual representation of each step in the task to help the child remember what comes next. Encourage the child to refer back to the planner when they lose focus or forget the next step. They can tick or rub off each step as they complete it to begin to encourage their independence.



Receptive Language

(Understanding of language)

Receptive language: a child's ability to understand what has been said to them.

There are many factors that can influence a child's ability to understand and follow directions. This can include their attention and listening (see separate handout), the amount of information, the order in which information is given and the child's understanding of the individual words that are being used.

Information carrying words:

Information Carrying Words or key words are those words in a sentence that carry meaning, which the child has to understand in order to know what is being said to them/ asked of them.

Key words must have an alternative choice, for example 'Find the apple' when there is a choice of an apple or banana would be a 1 key word instruction. If there was no other choice, this would not require the key word understanding of 'apple' as the child can choose what is in front of them.

Context and gestures can often aid understanding and remove the need to understand the words. For example, if an adult holds up a child's coat and says 'put your coat on', the child does not need to understand the words used, because they can see what is needed from context and/or the gestures from adults.

Examples include:

One key word:

- 'Find the apple' if there is an apple or a carrot.

Two key word:

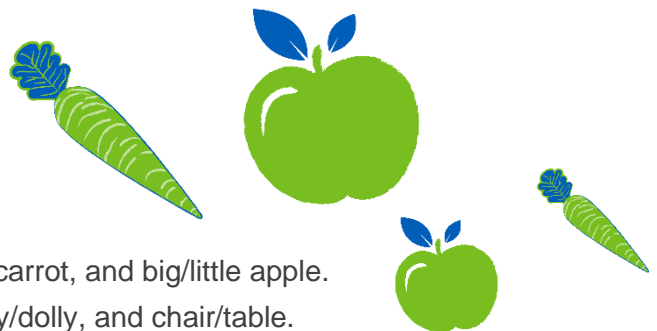
- 'Find the big apple' if there is a choice from big/little carrot, and big/little apple.
- 'Put teddy on the chair' if there is a choice from teddy/dolly, and chair/table.

Three key word:

- 'Put big carrot in the cup' if there is a choice from big/little carrot, big/little banana, cup/bowl.

Four key word:

- 'Give teddy the big blue brick' if there is a choice from teddy/dolly, red/blue/yellow bricks and big and small bricks/cars.



Use everyday activities to develop understanding skills:

- ✓ Playing games such as Simon says can help to improve a child's ability to follow instructions and also attention and listening skills.
- ✓ Use games to introduce new concepts and complete instructions relating to these. E.g. can you put the doll under the table?
- ✓ When playing outside on equipment there are lots of opportunities to increase a child's vocabulary. Concepts such as: in, on, under, in front and behind can modelled, as well as learning new words (climb, bench, balancing).
- ✓ Barrier Games can work on social interaction, understanding and use of language. These involve a pair/group of people – there is a 'barrier' in between the members so they cannot see what the other is

doing. Players take turns giving instructions, and at the end of the game the 'barriers' are removed to see if everyone has achieved the same outcome – please ask your speech and language therapist for more information on barrier games if required.

How to support receptive language

- ✓ Gain the child's attention before speaking, such as physical prompts (touching arm) or saying their name.
- ✓ Minimise distractions within the environment.
- ✓ Be aware of the vocabulary used – does the child know the words?
- ✓ Break instructions down into smaller 'chunks' and give information in the order in which it should be completed. Rather than saying 'Before you go outside, put your lunchbox away,' say 'Put your lunchbox away, then go outside.'
- ✓ Slow down your rate of speech. Give the child time to process what you have said and respond. Try counting to 10 before repeating – avoid changing the language you use.
- ✓ Use visual aids (objects, pictures, gesture) to support your language, concepts, and ideas. Spoken language fades away as soon as the information is given, whereas visuals remain for children to refer back to. See visuals on **page 71**.
- ✓ Teach new concepts one at a time. For example, if you were teaching hot and cold, start by teaching hot before moving on to cold.
- ✓ When introducing new vocabulary, relate it to the child's own experiences or give them the experience. Always proceed from concrete (what the child knows) to abstract (what you are asking them to imagine). For example...if teaching the child the concept of first/last, you may want to set up some toys arranged in a line so that the child can see which toy is first and which toy is last. Once they are confident with identifying the first and last physical toys, you can progress to showing them pictures of toys and asking questions related to "first/last".
- ✓ Be aware of the number of key words given in an instruction. Try reducing the number of key words if the child has difficulty understanding the instruction.



Questions

For information about understanding and responding to questions, please see “**Blank's Levels of Questioning**” on **page 22**.

Blank's Levels of Questioning

Blank's Levels of Questioning is a questioning framework. There are four levels of questioning which move from simple, concrete questions to more difficult, abstract questions.

Blank's questions encourage development of general language and vocabulary as well as skills in comprehension, reasoning, inferencing, predicting and problem solving. Children will move through each level of understanding as they progress through the nursery/preschool setting.

Level 1- Naming

The child applies language to what he/she sees in the everyday world. The information needed is directly in front of them or recently removed. Responses can be short or non-verbal (e.g. pointing).

Level 1 question examples

- What is this?
- Find one like this... (matching)
- What colour is this?
- What did you see/hear?
- Pick up...
- Show me a...



Level 2-Describing

Level 2 requires a child to draw information from what they see. The child has to select what to attend to (e.g. size, colour or function of an object) and analyse what they see. For example, they will need the ability to group objects and to describe and understand object functions. 60% of 3 year olds understand at levels 1 and 2.

Level 2 question examples

- Who is in the picture?
- What is the boy doing?
- Where is the...?
- Describe characteristics of objects e.g. What size/shape/colour is it? How does it taste/smell/feel?
- Identifying object functions e.g. "what do we cut with?"
- Tell me something that is a type of fruit. (Naming an object from a category.)
- What goes together e.g. "what goes with a fork?"
- How are these different?

Level 3- Retelling

The language does not relate directly to what the child can see or hear but instead the child must think and reorder the information given. Certain basic facts must be considered and evaluated before responding. The questions require the child to make basic predictions, assume the role of another person or make generalisations.

Level 3 question examples

- What will happen next?
- What is a...? (Definition)
- What could he say?
- How does she feel?
- How are these the same? (Identifying similarities)
- Multi-step instructions
- Tell a story or re-tell an event
- Sequencing e.g. a series of pictures
- Find another example with different conditions e.g. "find something else you can eat but is cold".

Level 4- Justifying

The child has to reason beyond what is seen, heard or said. They need to use reasoning and draw on past experiences. Level 4 questions require the listener to problem solve, predict, and provide explanations. 65% of 5 year olds understand at levels 3 and 4.

Level 4 question examples

- What will happen if...? (Prediction)
- Why did you do that? (Justification)
- How did that happen? (Identify the cause of an event)
- What could the boy do? (Problem solving)
- How can you tell she is sad? (Making an inference from an observation)
- Why can we not wear flip flops in winter? (Explaining why something cannot be done)

How can you help?

Ensure questions are of a suitable difficulty for the child. If a child is unable to answer the question asked after being given sufficient processing time to process this, adults should adapt the question to a lower level. If the child seems unable to answer a question, think about how you can change the question to make it easier for the child to understand and respond to.

- ✓ Rephrase questions to make them more concrete, relating to the 'here and now'. For example: Simplify a question about an inferred feeling "How do you think Little Bear felt about his chair being broken?" to a question about something that can be seen "Look at the tears running down Little Bear's cheek. What is he doing?"
- ✓ Reduce the number of elements. For example, simplify a question about multiple elements such as "What is happening in this picture?" to a question that focuses on just one aspect, "What is the dog doing?"
- ✓ Ask questions about personal experiences. For example, simplify a question such as "Why do firefighters wear such big heavy coats?" to "What does it feel like when you stand close to a fire?"

- ✓ Ask questions about very recent events or objects that are present. For example: Simplify a question about a prediction such as “What do you think you will eat for dinner?” to a question about an event that just took place like “When we made our soup today, what did we put in it?”.
- ✓ Shorten the length of the question or simplify the sentence structure. For example: Simplify the question “Why did Arthur draw red dots on his body and pretend to be sick?” to “Did Arthur want to stay home from nursery/preschool?”, “Did he want the kids at nursery/preschool to see his new glasses?”
- ✓ Simplify a question or use familiar vocabulary. e.g. instead of asking an open-ended question “What kind of instrument is this?”, ask a closed question which only requires the child to make a choice “Is this a piano or a guitar?”, or try a yes/no question like “Is this a drum that we hit with a stick?”
- ✓ Allow more time for comprehension and responding. For example tell the child “I’ll come back to you in a minute. You think about it for a bit.” You can also try asking another child the same type of question first so that they can provide a model for the child.
- ✓ Once a child has learned to answer questions at one level, adults can start to ask questions at a higher level and offer the child choices for the answers. These choices will help a child to understand what the question means and how to answer these questions in an expected way.
- ✓ When working towards a particular level with a child, model the questions and answers to those questions throughout the day and when looking at books together. Explain how you got to your answer e.g. “I know the boy is cold because he’s shivering”.

Asking questions after an incident

When children are calm they may be able to understand some questions at level 3 and 4. However, when they are upset and angry they may struggle with these types of complex questions. Questions about behaviour incidents are often level 3 and 4. Try asking simpler questions and modelling the answers to more complex questions during these instances.

Simpler Questions	Level
Who was there?	2
What did X do?	2
Where did it happen?	2
What else can we use for X?	2
Point to [insert object].	1
Show me the [insert object].	1

Complex Questions	Level
Why did you do that?	4
What should you have done?	4
What could you do next time?	4
Why can't we run in the classroom?	4
Tell me what happened.	3
What did X say?	3
How does X feel?	3

See Appendix for summary sheet on Blank’s Levels of Questioning.

Expressive Language

(Use of language)

Expressive language refers to how a child communicates their wants/needs, thoughts and ideas. The majority of the time this language is verbal. However at times communication can be non-verbal (gestures/ body language/ facial expressions/signs/ symbols). It is important that a child is able to use all aspects of expressive communication in order to communicate effectively to others.

Before First Words

Copying is a key skill. When an adult copies a child, the child learns to copy the adult.

You need to give the child time to respond as they learn to copy new things.

You can practice copying through activities such as:

- ✓ Encouraging the child to copy actions e.g. clapping, waving, swaying, blowing raspberries, opening and shutting their mouth etc.
- ✓ Songs are a good way for learning to copy actions e.g. "Incy Wincey Spider", "The Wheels on the Bus" or "Twinkle Twinkle". Sing very slowly giving the child time to join in.
- ✓ Copy the child's sounds and encourage them to copy you back e.g. babbling sounds "mama, dada, baba"
- ✓ Copy the child's words.



Babble

The babble of babies is the way they learn which sounds their mouths can make and how to combine them into words. Children need to continue to play with sounds before they can move on to a wider repertoire of words.

- ✓ Initially, copy the sounds the child makes to gain their attention. This might be vocalisations, or non-speech sounds such as coughs, yawns, sneezes etc. After you copy, pause and see if the child will attempt to make the sound again.
- ✓ Use a sound and give the child a chance to make it themselves.
- ✓ Don't stop using words but remember that the aim is for the child to begin copying a wider range of sounds.
- ✓ You can develop conversational turn-taking with the child by taking turns to babble sounds.

Expanding Sounds

Adults should continue to practice turn-taking with sound play by copying the child's sounds. Adults can model different sounds throughout play and daily routines, providing the child with opportunities to copy these e.g.

- "mmmm" – car
- "sh" – pouring drink
- "bbbb" – bouncing ball
- "vvv" – van
- "mmmm" – good
- "sssss" – snake
- "ch-ch-ch" – train
- "ah" – sleeping
- "oo-oo" – monkey

You can also try the following activities:

- ✓ Making silly faces and noises in the mirror

- ✓ Using microphones, cardboard tubes, tin cans that echo.
- ✓ Singing nursery rhymes that have predictable noises/vocalisations in e.g. 'Row the boat' – *if you see a crocodile, don't forget to scream AHHHH*, or 'The wheels on the bus' – *the horn on the bus went beep beep beep*.

Early Words

A word is 'a consistent sound to mean something', and it does not have to be clear at this stage. Make a list of the words your child uses to help monitor their development.

Children's early words are usually words they have heard many times and are simple to produce. These might include:

- Family members, or those familiar to them.
- Animal sounds; "moo", "baa", "meow", "woof", "ee ee" (mouse), "roar" (lion, bear, dragon, monster)
- Phrases with lots of intonation e.g. "all gone", "oh dear", "uh-oh", "wow!", "yuck!" The intonation patterns make these phrases exciting and often attract the child's attention.
- Words relating to favourite foods, toys, or within daily routines.

To support the development of first words:

- ✓ Encourage the child to communicate in any way not just through words e.g. pointing, copying actions/ noises. Adults can then interpret and say back to the child what they would have said if they could. Next time the child might copy you or attempt a word.
- ✓ Create opportunities for communication, by setting up situations where the child is required to make a request. More information on this can be found on [page 11](#).
- ✓ Offer choices whenever possible e.g. 'banana or grapes?', 'milk or juice?', 'a book or a ball?' Show them the options and name them. They may point or reach to the one they want, then you can name it e.g. 'oh you want a banana'. More information on 'choices' can be found on [page 13](#).
- ✓ Use simple language to comment on what the child is doing, whilst they are doing it. Label objects, and actions, with simple vocabulary.
- ✓ Use lots of repetition referring to the same item e.g. 'red car', 'car is driving', 'wow fast car'.
- ✓ Create familiar, verbal routines where the same language is used each time within an activity e.g. 'ready, steady, go', or 'night night sleep tight'.
- ✓ Use specific vocabulary when talking instead of using words like 'it' or 'that' e.g. 'put your coat on' rather than saying 'put it on'.

Developing Phrases

Once a child has a variety of single words, it is useful to build their vocabulary of verbs (action words), as this allows them to combine words which enables them to produce short phrases to describe what they, or others around them, are doing.

Verbs

It is easiest for children to learn verbs (action words) **as they are happening**, within the present tense; these often end in '-ing'. Begin by labelling actions that the child can do or see themselves e.g. eating, climbing, playing.

Top tips for teaching verbs:

- ✓ Provide a running commentary about what you / the child is doing throughout their everyday activities and routine e.g. 'we're washing your hands – wash wash wash. Now let's rub them, ooo rubbing hands'.
- ✓ Model pretend play and perform actions on the child's favourite toys e.g. 'let's make teddy sleep', 'Oh no the car is falling!', 'ah, CRASH the trains'.
- ✓ Commentating when playing at the park on equipment or creating an obstacle course in the garden e.g. swinging, throwing, kicking, climbing.
- ✓ Different craft and messy play activities can bring exciting new vocabulary. Playdoh introduces terms such as 'squash', 'roll', 'squeeze', or painting with 'brush', 'splat', 'drip'.
- ✓ It is more difficult to teach verbs that cannot be seen e.g. 'to like', 'to think'. So try and comment on what a child is experiencing in the moment, so they understand as much of the meaning from the context as possible.
- ✓ As a child's language skills progress, they will later learn to use grammatical rules to change verbs into past and future tenses. It is recommended that you repeat back action words with the correct tense e.g. child: "I jumping on the bed", adult: "yes, you jumpeded on the bed."



There are several strategies adults can use to support a child to develop phrases.

- ✓ Use "**match plus one**". This means expanding the child's utterance by one word and/or idea. Be creative in the words you are adding on. For example if the child says, "a red car" you say "Driving a red car" or "The red car has gone."
- ✓ **Expand the child's sentences.** Use the technique of 'rising intonation'. When the child gives a short verbal response e.g. "The man's riding the horse", repeat what the child says with a rising/questioning intonation and then pause. You will find that children will often then add more information e.g. "Over the fence". Then the adult should repeat the whole sentence to model how to use the two parts together e.g. "That's right, the man's riding the horse over the fence."
- ✓ **Modelling** - If the child uses incorrect grammar in a sentence, repeat back their sentence using correct grammar. For example if they say "her go park" you can say "yes she is going to the park". You don't need to tell them it's wrong or make them repeat themselves during everyday activities.
- ✓ **Keep your language simple and repetitive** to give the child lots of experience of important words and phrases.
- ✓ **Try not to ask too many questions. For each question, try offering four comments afterwards.** For example if you ask what the child is doing, follow this with four related comments.
- ✓ **Questions** - If you do need to ask the child a question, give them time to answer it. If they say "I don't know" let them know it's okay to take time to think and wait for them. Alternatively, you could simplify the question and model the answer to the more difficult question. You could use phrases such "I wonder...." instead of asking a direct question.
- ✓ **Do not put pressure on children to talk.** Try making comments on what the child is doing rather than asking direct questions. For example, say "You've got the car," rather than "What have you got?" Without pressure to talk the child may find it easier to respond.
- ✓ **Colourful Semantics** can be used to support a child's understanding of how to make a longer phrase/sentence. Please see **page 30** on this for details.



Building Vocabulary

When introducing new words and vocabulary to children, repetition is very important!

It may take a while for the child to become familiar with what the word means, and what it is associated with, before they are able to understand, and then use this word themselves.

- It is helpful to choose just a few words to use repeatedly across several activities. Focus on words which will be most functional and meaningful. Only introduce 2-3 new words at a time, with lots of opportunity for repetition and rehearsal.
- Do not pressure the child to say the word – most of the focus will be on adults saying the word.
- Use physical activities to show the child the word and how it is used, rather than trying to explain it. It will be easier for the child to understand the word if they have experienced it themselves e.g. if talking about things that are 'hot' and 'cold', you can play with some ice/warm water or a hot flannel or try different foods and talk about how they are 'hot' and 'cold'.
- Identify and prioritise key vocabulary items that the child needs to understand and focus on introducing these vocabulary items in a number of different activities e.g. if looking at 'The Three Little Pigs' you may focus on 'pig', 'wolf', 'house', 'straw', 'sticks', 'brick'.
- It is important to support the child to develop their vocabulary for a variety of communication reasons e.g. to label items 'car', make requests 'more', make comments 'gone', and use social phrases 'bye-bye'.

Use everyday activities to expand a child's language:

- Playing in the water or sand tray can help with learning concepts: full/empty/more/less.
- Getting dressed is an opportunity to demonstrate sequencing e.g. "We are going to put on your t-shirt and **then** your shorts."
- Using a visual timetable several times throughout the day can help teach vocabulary related to days of the week, sequential concepts (first/second/third/last), before and after, morning and afternoon.
- During familiar routine activities such as bath time, or on the equipment at the park can be good opportunities to increase vocabulary. Concepts such as: in, on, under, in front and behind can be modelled, and new words can be taught (hurdles, bench, balancing).



Vocabulary Wheels

Vocabulary wheels help us to categorise the different types of words which adults can use to comment on a child's interest or daily living activity. These include:

- Action words
- Question words
- Words which express belonging
- Location words
- Feelings
- Social words
- Descriptive words
- Naming words

There is an example of the vocabulary wheel on the next page. Why not make one of these based on your child's interests? **See Appendix for a blank wheel.**



Concepts

Children, as they develop, will start to notice things about the world around them such as locations (in/on/under), size (big/little), colours (red, yellow, green), quantities (many/ few, lots/ a little), sequences and routines (first, next, then), attributes (fast, slow, hot, cold) similarities and differences.

They will need adults to talk about these concepts with them so that they can understand what these concepts are and what they mean. This will help them to understand instructions and formulate longer sentences. Learning about concepts links to the EYFS framework as these skills are needed for early numeracy development.

Top tips for teaching concepts:

- Do not introduce more than 4 concepts at a time.
- Do not teach opposite concepts together. For example, teach cold vs not cold rather than cold vs hot. This avoids confusion of opposites.

Consider using the **PORIC** approach (developed by Glinette Woods and Deborah Acors).

- When introducing a concept, start with something **Personal** which involves the child’s actions and experiences e.g. if introducing the concept of cold, the child could eat some ice cream.
- Then progress to **Objects**. For example, you may present a child with some objects to sort which are cold and not cold (metal which has been in the fridge and room temp plastic).
- Then **Representational**- Look at how ‘cold’ is represented in pictures e.g. reading The Snowman, watching Pingu etc.
- **Independent**- Encourage the child to find something/somewhere that is cold e.g. the fridge/going outside. It may be helpful to plant something in the room which is related to the concept you’re trying to teach, to make this easier for the child.
- After this, **consolidate** by revisiting the concept over the next few weeks.

Colourful Semantics

Colourful semantics is a visual approach to learning language. It works by focusing on the structure of a sentence and can be used to help develop / expand an individual's language skills, support with understanding and much more. For more advice on building vocabulary and using phrases/ sentences, please see the advice sheet entitled 'Expressive language'.

Using Colourful Semantics:

Colourful Semantics works in stages, helping children to learn parts of a sentence one at a time. The child learns how different words work using colours.



Introduce 'WHO' (orange) words

These Include:

- People e.g. man, baby, Grandma
- Animals e.g. horse, dog, butterfly
- Occupations e.g. clown, hairdresser, doctor
- Pronouns e.g. he, she, it, they

Activities:

- Looking at pictures and talking about who you can see
- During the circle time – who is in today?
- When reading story books – who is in the story?

Introduce 'DOING' (yellow) words

These can include:

- 'stand alone' verbs e.g. run, sit
- Verbs associated with an object e.g. wash (car), brush (hair)
- Different tenses (past, present, future)

Combining 'WHO' + 'DOING':

- Look at pictures and use cue cards to prompt who is in the picture (e.g. the boy), what are they 'doing' (e.g. sleeping)?
- Ask the child to combine the two parts of the sentence (e.g. **the boy is sleeping**)

Introduce '(to) WHAT' (green) words

Teach in conjunction with 'DOING' words

- Identify actions in the classroom, story books, pictures

- Introduce 'DOING' words that can be associated with an object e.g. reading (a book), throwing (a ball) etc.

Combining 'WHO' + 'DOING' + 'WHAT'

- Who is in the picture? (a boy) What is the boy doing? (reading) What is the boy reading? (a book)
Can you put it together? (the boy is reading a book)

Introduce 'WHERE' (blue) words

- Look at pictures and identify the 'where' words e.g. under the chair, in the box, in the garden etc.
- Playing hiding games – ask 'where' things or people are hidden
- Combining 'WHO' + 'DOING' + 'WHAT' + 'WHERE'
- Identify each aspect of the sentence using the cue cards. As before, adding the new question – where is the boy? (in the library) Can you put the sentence together? (the boy is reading a book in the library).

How to use:

Please contact your speech and language therapist for a Colourful Semantics Pack. You should add more pictures to this relating to the child's interests or key topics.

- Show the child a picture.
- Ask the child specific questions, as shown above, to help them to label different parts of the sentence. When asking about a specific part of the sentence point to the colour that it corresponds to.
- If the child cannot answer a question such as "who...", show them the symbols for two options for the answer, for example "the girl" or "the boy", ask the child to pick the correct option.
- If a child finds it difficult to select the correct verb, you can show them a symbol for the correct option, alongside an extremely different, or a known verb symbol e.g. if the target is 'carrying' you could show them carrying and eating.
- Once the child has said all the parts of the sentence, ask the child to put them together into one sentence. Point to each of the colours as they say the sentence.

Note:

- Start with one level at a time and slowly add in more once you are sure the child is consistently able to identify the previous elements.
- Not all sentences have all four colours. For example: "The girl is sitting on the chair" does not have a location and so won't use the green colour.
- The child may not use all the little words such as 'the' and 'was'. That's ok! When the child has said their version of the sentence, say this back to them how you would say it, with all the little words added in.

Using Colourful Semantics in the Nursery setting

In 1:1, or small groups:

Use 'Colourful Semantics' activities, to develop the child's sentence structure and word order. Also, use these activities to highlight the smaller words in sentences, such as articles ('it', 'a') and conjunctions ('and', 'because').

These activities can also be used to encourage vocabulary development, for example, by discussing the pictures and naming items depicted.

In the nursery setting:

Please use the colour sentence strips and reference colours when asking questions, to reinforce the links.

-
- You can make a book with different coloured pages, where the child can stick pictures.
 - Stick the coloured sentence strips on the wall and continue to reference colours throughout discussions or circle time, to reinforce the links.
 - During circle time or shared reading time, use the sentence strips available in the starter pack, to reference different questions when you are asking the child about a story (e.g. when asking 'who?' questions, point to the orange-coloured square).

Generalising the activities

At home, parents/family members are encouraged to talk to their child about what is happening and encourage the child to say what is happening, or what they can see. For example

- Asking them questions – where is the X?; who can you see? What are they doing? What are they using to do it with?

Further Resources

For more information on colourful semantics please contact your speech and language therapist. You can also access a video to see colourful semantics in action here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17smjL8Y21s>

There is also a useful book 'Colourful Semantics' by NHS Forth Valley, see here

https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/9780367210502?gC=5a105e8b&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI7vng0OfH7AIV1u3tCh0MRwyHEAQYASABEgIQO_D_BwE

Word Finding Difficulties

Our word store is thought to be organised so that words which have similar meanings are grouped together. If a child stores their words in a logical manner it will be easier for them to be recalled.

The information that you have about a particular word enables you to get from the 'meaning of the word' to the 'sound level' in order to produce the word. The more information about a word that is stored the easier it is to retrieve that word.

What are word finding difficulties?

Word-finding difficulties can be characterised as difficulties with:

- Acquiring new vocabulary
- Categorising new or existing vocabulary within the brain
- Retrieving a word from the brain when it is needed



A child with word finding difficulties may:

- Use excessive filler words, such as 'um', empty words, such as 'thing' or general verbs, such as 'doing'.
- Use a similar sounding word in replacement of the one they would like to use, e.g. 'camera' instead of 'camel'.
- Use a word with a similar meaning, function or from the same category, such as 'lion' instead of 'tiger'.
- Hesitate excessively in conversation.
- Repeat words or phrases in conversation.
- Rephrase what they are saying.
- Use excessive gesture to model the word, for example, miming tooth brushing instead of using the word 'toothbrush'.
- Talk about their difficulty, e.g. they may say 'I know it, but I can't think of it' or will say 'I've forgotten'.

How can an adult help?

A child with word finding difficulties can be helped by adults supporting them to strengthen brain connections involved with learning new vocabulary, 'storage' of vocabulary and retrieval of vocabulary.

Below are some examples of vocabulary activities focused on categorising words and talking about properties of words (e.g. sounds in words, what you use them for, similarities and differences) – include topic and vocabulary in the activities as much as possible.

- **Categorisation games:** collect objects and put them into groups by size, material, location, colour etc.
- **Odd one out activities:** collect objects/pictures and talk about which one is the odd one out.

- **Guess the object/ What am I?:** Encourage the child to describe an object for you or others to guess. You may like to have a check list of attributes she has to describe, e.g. 'where does it live', 'what colour is it', 'what do you do with it'
- **Word classification games:** Play games where the child must name as many items belonging to a category as possible e.g. "how many animals can you think of?", words beginning with a 'p' sound, feelings in a given situation.
- **What's the difference? games:** 'What's the difference between a torch and a lamp? They both give off light, but you can move a torch around.
- **Word association games:** "a fish goes with..." (the water), "a tractor goes with..." (a farmer)
- **Think of words that have similar meanings** (and what small differences there might be) or **think of opposites.**

If a child has these difficulties the following may be helpful:

- Encourage them to show you what they mean if they can't think of the word.
- Ask them to describe the object by function or attributes e.g. what is it used for?, what does it look like?, what colour is it? etc.
- Point out that sometimes the following things help:
 - Describing the word until you think of it
 - Using another word that means the same
 - Taking time to think
 - Visualising the idea in your head
 - Using gesture
- Provide praise and encouragement when they use any of these strategies.
- If you know the target word, prompt them with the first sound e.g. "it starts with pl" (plate).
- Allow them time to think (count to 10 seconds in your head). Try to avoid pre-empting them or guessing what they mean before they are finished.
- If they use non-specific vocabulary such as 'thing' repeat back the information they were telling you, using and emphasising the correct vocabulary. For example: child says: "cutting that" Adult: "yes cutting the **cake**"
- They can often tell you the function or describe an object to you if they can't think of the word. Rather than trying to guess the word, ask them if they can tell you what it looks like or what it is used for. Encourage them to use any other words that are similar.
- Support the child when they can't think of a word or if they make an error. You can say 'did you mean how many days in a **night**?' and see if they can self-correct (e.g. to week). If they can't, try to describe the word they are looking for and see if that helps, i.e. if the target word is 'pineapple' you could say "it's yellow with green spiky leaves".

Echolalia

What is echolalia?

Echolalia is a word used to describe when a child repeats noises, words, or phrases which they have heard from elsewhere from elsewhere. In many instances, echolalia is an attempt to communicate, to learn language, or to practice language.

Repetitive speech is a common part of language development. It is most commonly seen between the ages of 1-2 ½ years old and reduces by the age of 3. It is common for children with Autism Spectrum, developmental delays, or communication difficulties to use echolalia beyond this time.

Types of echolalia

There are two types of Echolalia, 'immediate echolalia', or 'delayed echolalia'.

- Immediate echolalia is when a child immediately imitates a word or phrase they have just heard e.g. the teacher says 'do you want a drink?', and the child says 'you want a drink'.
- Delayed echolalia is when a child hears/watches something and then is later heard reciting words and phrases from what they watched. This delay may be hours, days, weeks or months later e.g. a child may watch Paw Patrol, and then later repeat an interaction between two characters, or sing the theme song. Some children have extensive memories and can recite large portions of programs/films.
- Echolalia can also include the imitation of a person's intonation, tone, and volume.

Function of echolalia

Identifying how and why a child uses echolalia will help determine how we can enhance its function to support the child's communication and interaction skills.

Some examples are described below:

- Using repeated phrases to take a turn a turn in conversation (although the words used may not be relevant to the topic).
- Using a repeated phrase to make a request e.g. saying, 'do you want lunch?' to indicate that they would like some lunch.
- Using phrases to complete familiar verbal routines e.g. when asked to complete a task, they might say 'good job', whilst completing it, as this is what they are used to hearing.
- Reciting sections of dialogue from a TV program, adverts, or songs. This may be used to request or be self-stimulatory.
- Repeating a phrase softly to themselves before responding in a normal voice. This may be practice for the anticipated interaction or may be the child gaining more time to formulate their idea.

Communication

Echolalia can at times make it difficult for individuals to communicate their own needs effectively.

Some examples where this may happen include:

- A child may repeat a question, rather than provide an answer - it can be difficult to gauge whether they have understood, whether they are indicating 'yes' or 'no', or their preference.
- A child may reply to questions with a response they have learnt previously, rather than being their current wants e.g. if asked 'what did you have for a lunch?', a child may respond 'fish and chips', even if they

actually had a ham sandwich, as they may have learnt that this was an appropriate response to this question previously.

- A child may say a particular phrase, to initiate an interaction e.g. saying 'Ready or not, here I come' to initiate a game of Hide and Seek. Adults who are not familiar with this initiation may find it difficult to understand the child's request.

In order to understand what the child is trying to communicate, it is important to consider the context of the situation, and also look at other non-verbal cues to 'read' the child's communication attempt.

- Are they reaching towards an item? Looking at what they want? Have they used or heard this language in a previous situation which may be associated with what they mean now?
- You may need to observe the child and follow their lead in order to better understand the contexts in which echolalia is used, and what the child is communicating in these situations.
- Sometimes echolalia is a child's response when their system is overstimulated. Children who are tired, hungry, scared, sick, extremely bored, or overwhelmed may use echolalia as a way to self-calm. On the other hand, some children who feel under-stimulated may use echolalia to self-stimulate. Adults should analyse the situation and see what kind of support you can provide to them environmentally.

You may also use visual supports to help establish the child's needs in different ways. See pages 71.

Strategies to support echolalia

- Comment on activities using words that would also be appropriate coming from the child and physically assist them if necessary, e.g. When in the bath, you might say: "Here's the flannel. . . . Need some soap. . . . Wash arms. . . . Washing one arm. . . . All done. . . . Washing the other arm." This avoids providing language that may sound unusual if copied from the child's perspective.
- It is important to comment when a child performs an action or if they are given/shown something to help them link the language to the action/object.
- As much as possible, avoid questions and direct commands and replace them with statements that the child can imitate and reuse in similar situations e.g. 'Harry likes biscuits' rather than 'Do you like biscuits?'
- Try to use the names of people around the child rather than pronouns e.g. 'Mummy will help Harry get up', 'Give Becky the cup'.
- If the child reaches for an item, put into words what they want e.g. 'Want the apple' or 'Harry wants book'.
- If the child uses language such as 'Do you want a book?' model back 'Harry wants a book' as you give it to them.
- When offering the child choices, avoid asking them what they want, but name the items as you offer them e.g. 'Orange...tomato...Harry wants – 'leaving the blank for them to fill it in. If they name the item and take it, re-enforce 'Harry wants orange'. If they don't say anything and just take it, model 'Orange' and pause.
- If the child indicates that they want you to do something, model the language as if directing yourself e.g. 'Teacher, help please' or 'Kerry zip it up'. Avoid saying it with a questioning tone or they will probably mimic that tone. If they don't request an action from someone, physically prompt them. You, or a silent third person, could help them hold out the ends of their jacket or a box they can't open and then say "Please zip" or "Open it."
- When modelling sentences to the child, ensure these are only a word or two longer than what they say spontaneously and appropriately. If they echo five-word sentences but create new ideas in only one or two words, you should model two- to three-word phrases. They may need to be short and simple but should not be "baby talk," and you don't need to omit words like "a" and "the."

-
- Teach appropriate rejection by helping them push an unwanted item away or back off and model what they could say to protest e.g. 'No apple' or 'No washing face'. Sometimes you can accept his refusal, but in other cases you'll need to overrule them by acknowledging their preference "Harry doesn't like hand washing"—pause, then go on—"Harry's hands are dirty. . . . Harry has to wash hands."
 - Try to avoid statements like "Good for you!" and "You did it!" Instead, try to praise the child by making an enthusiastic comment on the accomplishment. Words like "There, it's done!" "Hurray!" "Yeah!" "Good, all done!" or "I did it!" are more appropriate if they repeat them.

Advice adapted from Field, E.I. (2005). Suggestions for caregivers of children with echolalia.

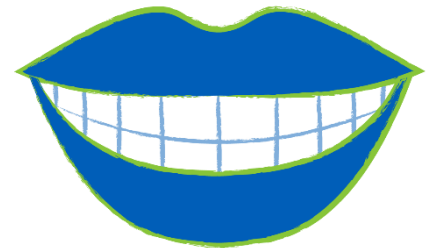
Unclear Speech

Unclear speech is an expected part of pre school children's development, in the same way that first steps are wobbly and the fine motor skills needed for holding a toy or object are unsteady in those earliest years.

Common themes as children start to talk

First words

First words will be simplified by children (at whatever age those words arrive) and will be 'unclear' to adult listeners when spoken out of context. It is important that those early attempts at words are encouraged and get a positive response, in a similar way to how we respond to children taking their first wobbly steps.



Phrases

Sometimes children's speech becomes less clear when they start to use phrases and longer sentences as the content the child attempts to use becomes more varied. This demands more of their speech skills, as they are required attempt multiple tricky speech sound combinations in a row. A 'lispy' speech quality, where the tongue is slightly forward for early words and phrases in the preschool years is not unusual.

Some words may be learnt at an early developmental stage e.g. pyjamas – 'jarmy jarms' and might stay as this 'baby word' for some time, either because those words are easier to say or because adults start using the baby word too!

Tongue-tie

Sometimes if a tongue tie has been noted in a baby, parents might naturally be concerned, but a tongue-tie will not necessarily have an impact on speech. Parents of young children often find it helpful to listen out for tongue tip sounds t/d/n in early words- these are early indicators that the child is elevating the front of their tongue for speech.

Dummy use

Prolonged use of a dummy can impact of speech, particularly if the child attempts to talk with it in their mouth.

Speech sounds

There is an expected developmental order for speech sounds, so if you child has difficulty with one or two sounds this may be normal for their age.

Take a look at the Speech Sound development chart - people often notice their child says red as 'wed', and this is a typical developmental process until around 5 years of age. See page 89 for typical speech sound acquisition.

As the child develops they may be able to make a sound on its own but not use it within words. This is a normal stage of development, progressing towards using the sound in simple words, then a wider range of words, then short phrases, sentences and eventually in conversation. A child may be

able to make the “s” sound on its own e.g. for a snake sound, but then say “tock” for “sock”. The best way to help is to repeat the words correctly, so that the child hears a good role model at a time when that sound/word is important to them.

Strategies that can support a child with unclear speech:

- If a dummy is part of your child’s routine, limit its use and work towards giving it up where possible.
- Remember it is always important to respond to what the child says more than how they are saying it.
- Children often do not realise they are mispronouncing words so correcting them or asking them to say it again can be confusing.
- Don’t make a young child repeat words, when they are ready, they might spontaneously try to.
- Repeat back what the child says, but with the correct speech model
- If the child says “I like --chool”, you could say “Yes school is fun.” This way you are saying “Yes I know what you mean, and this is how you say these words”. You may want to give just the slightest emphasis to the sound(s) the child has mispronounced. They will not change their production of the word immediately.
- Drawing too much attention to mispronunciations is not helpful. However, some older pre schoolers whose speech is mostly consistent might be ready for a positive and fun challenge of using a word or sound they can sometimes. For example, you might say ‘ohh school, there’s that sc- sound we were practising the other day...school...’
- Have fun with rhyming- Rhyming activities are really helpful for promoting careful listening to speech sounds, Occasionally, it might be helpful to highlight 2 words from part of a story or song that rhyme e.g. ‘snail...tail- they rhyme!!’
- Build self-esteem around communication- if part of the child’s conversation is understood, repeat it back. This shows them that they have been partially successful and may encourage them to tell you more. Use strategies to help anticipate what the child might say, for example, by using a home-school book, in which parents or nursery can briefly note events or weekend activities; or use books, pictures, models etc. Letting Grandparents know in advance what words might come up e.g. friends’ names or a nursery trip to a special place, can be helpful. These can help if the child’s speech is very unclear because you have some idea of what they might be trying to communicate. As ever, give praise for other things the child does well.
- Don’t pretend to understand but do focus on the parts you do understand, and show you are listening by being down at your child’s level, allowing time and giving eye contact and encouragement. You can find out more by gently asking probing questions, saying “show me” encouraging the use of gesture and mime or letting the child take you to things can also help.
- Recapping the part you did understand ‘so you took your bucket in the garden and you collected a.....’ so that the child only has to repeat the part that has not been understood.
- Sometimes you just have to admit that you didn’t understand, and in those situations, point out that your ‘listening ears’ are finding things tricky today- be practical and explain what else might be contributing to it being hard to listen e.g. if you are walking alongside a noisy road together, or if you have a cold.
- Be as reassuring as possible.
- Sometimes, when a pattern of speech gets very stuck in an early developmental stage, or the child uses unusual speech patterns, speech and language therapy is needed. A referral to audiology for a hearing test is usually suggested at this stage as well

If you have had advice from the Speech and Language Therapist about your child being ready for support to target a specific sound, then the following advice will be relevant to you.

Targeting a Specific Sound

The activities below can be used to work on a specific sound that has been identified as difficult for the child (more than we might expect for their age). Please use this alongside the Appendix entitled 'Typical development of speech sounds'.

Top Tips:

- Make sure the child can say the sound on its own (e.g. s) before asking the child to say it in words (e.g. sock).
- Emphasise the target sound of the word you are modelling (e.g. sssun).
- Take every opportunity to use words with the target sound when talking with the child (e.g. your hair is really silky, Here are your socks, Teddy is sitting on the seat).
- Make a scrap book of pictures of the target sound using old magazines.
- Choose five minutes a day for dedicated speech sounds practise. Explain to the child that he/she should try really hard to say the target sound in words. For the rest of the day do not bring attention to their speech error but continue to provide a good speech model by producing the word correctly yourself.
- Provide specific feedback to the child e.g. that was a good 'sss' sound.
- Use the speech sound ladder when working on a specific speech sound. Use the table for ideas on how to work on each stage of the ladder, and when to move up to the next level. See the following example on how to work on the 'f' sound.



Speech Sound Ladder- starting at the bottom, and taking speech sounds in small steps:



Activities for each stage of the speech sound ladder:

Target	Activity
Can they hear the sound they make?	Get the child to identify which sound they heard from a choice of 2.
Making the sound on its own.	Use a mirror to help the child produce the target sound. Make sure the child can see your mouth and theirs in the mirror so they can see how the sound needs to look as well as their own production.
Add a vowel	<p>Model 'f' with a vowel and a gap e.g. f-oo f-ay f-ee f-oh. Begin to say them closer together until blended.</p> <p>Once the child is confident with this (regularly producing 8/10 sounds correctly), move on to working on words that begin with that sound.</p>
Single words	Use picture cards to practice saying words beginning with the target sound. Use games to get lots of repetitions of the target word.
Short phrases	Use a describing word with each word on the card. This means that the child will be saying two words, including the word with the target sound. For example: big...; small.....; red Big fish Small foot Red face
Simple sentences	Start with a simple sentence. The child should repeat it, adding in different words that begin with the target sound. e.g. I've found a; I've found a
More difficult sentences	Once they can do this easily, give the child the opportunity to use the sound in longer sentences.
Generalising	The next stage is to gradually see the sound being used in their everyday talking. It is a good idea to make time for 5 minutes daily 'special time' to focus on their sound. If they make a mistake, now is the time to prompt them gently: Is it bish or fish? After a while, you will only need to raise an eyebrow or pause to prompt them to self-correct. In this situation, little and often is more effective than long sessions focussing on their speech.

It is important to speak to the Speech and Language Therapist about which sounds should be worked on with a child.

Social Communication

What are social communication skills?

Social communication is a social interaction where people communicate through shared experiences and emotions with another person. These skills are important in order to build social relationships with other people.

Social Communication has three components, including:

1. The ability to use language for different purposes (e.g. to greet, inform people about things, demand, command, request).
2. The ability to adapt language to meet the needs of the listener or situation (e.g. talking differently to another child versus an adult, talking louder when there is lots of noise, being aware of the listener's knowledge and adapting the amount of information we provide, as needed).
3. Following the often “unspoken” rules of conversation and storytelling (e.g. taking turns in conversations, looking at the speaker, standing at an appropriate distance from the speaker, using facial expressions and gestures). ***The ‘rules’ of conversation are often different across cultures, within cultures and within different families.***

How can you tell if a child has difficulties with social communication?

It is not unusual for children to have social communication difficulties in a few situations. However, if they occur often, they may need further support for this.

A child with social communication difficulties may:

- Find it difficult to initiate or end interactions with others.
- Have difficulty remaining on topic in conversation.
- Not try to gain the attention of adults because they do not know how to or they may use inappropriate behaviour to gain an adult's attention
- Tend to stand too close to the speaker, unaware of personal space.
- Tell stories in a disorganised way.
- Have difficulty looking at the speaker or may look too intensely at the speaker.
- Dominate conversations with their preferred topics or discuss topics without considering the level of knowledge from the listener.
- Does not ask for clarification when they haven't understood.
- Be unable to interpret the tone of voice in others (e.g. does not recognise an angry versus a happy voice).
- Use language in a limited way (e.g. only gives directions or makes statements but doesn't greet or ask questions).
- Have difficulty understanding another person's point of view.
- Have difficulty making and/or maintaining friendships.

Strategies for supporting social communication

- ✓ Encourage the child to become an active listener, by using the following strategies: e.g. look at the speaker, sit still, think about the words he is saying and try to talk about the same things. You may wish to remind the child by using pictures or symbols.
- ✓ Don't expect eye contact if this is uncomfortable for the child; instead, suggest they turn their bodies to face you so that you know they are listening even if they cannot make eye contact.
- ✓ Use Circle time to teach key principals of good social interaction e.g. listening, looking, waiting, turn taking and responding to others. Adults should model appropriate behaviour.
- ✓ Encourage the child through modelling to greet and say goodbye to adults and peers using appropriate phrases.
- ✓ Model how to maintain a conversation by nodding, maintaining eye contact and using verbal fillers such as uh-hum, ummm, ok etc...
- ✓ Guide the child to stay on topic. If they change subject, pause, and gently remind them of the conversational topic. Recognise if the child is communicating appropriately for the audience – highlight times when the child has given you too little, or too much information e.g. let them know if you don't understand and highlight when the detail is irrelevant because you already know it.
- ✓ Encourage turn-taking, initially through games, and then through conversation. Ensure the child is aware of the need to take turns in conversation so that each person has a time when they talk and when they listen.
- ✓ Try to avoid being side-tracked by off-topic interruptions. This can easily become a child's monologue, rather than a reciprocal conversation. Praise the child for their input but remind them of the topic and request they continue with related information.
- ✓ When setting group tasks, make sure all group members are certain what the task is and what the expectations are. Try to allocate specific roles (e.g. cutting the tissue paper, sticking the paper on the card) to make it easier for children to join in.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for structured activities throughout the day. This can be easier than unstructured socialising. These may be activities supported by an adult.



Developing social communication skills

Some children need support to develop their social communication skills. This can be for a variety of different reasons, and they may be at different stages of social communication development.

Intensive Interaction

Some children find it difficult to use intentional communication and may not yet be aware that their behaviour can influence changes in their environment, through another person.

Some children may not yet appear to notice or respond to another person within an interaction or allow another person to join their play space or activity.

Information about Intensive Interaction can be found on **page 78**.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Some children have difficulty initiating an interaction independently. They may not yet be aware that their behaviour can influence changes in their environment, through another person.

Some children may not seek an adult to make a request, or to indicate a want or need. They may not yet understand that an adult/another person, can facilitate this need being met. Information about PECS can be found on **pages 80**.

People Games

These games are where the child is playing with a person, rather than a toy. Playing with you is the best way for a child to learn how to interact and communicate. When a child is having fun and is relaxed they are more likely to be motivated to communicate with you.

People games may include:

- Chasing games
- Tickling/squeezing
- Soft play
- Peek-a-boo
- Singing nursery rhymes

People games help develop:

- The child's attention and awareness of engaging with another person.
- The child's awareness that they can make something enjoyable happen through their behaviour/communication.

Tips for people games:

- ✓ Start the game in the same way each time and repeat it several times so the child is familiar with the activity.
- ✓ Use the same, simple language throughout the game/routine.
- ✓ Once the child is familiar with the game, begin to leave a short pause. This will provide the child with the opportunity to communicate with or without words that they would like the game to continue. They may communicate this by looking at you, making a sound, flapping their hands, saying a word, or pushing your hand.

- ✓ When the child has communicated in any way that they would like the game to continue, respond as if they had said the word and continue with the game. Do not wait for the child to say the word or expect them to repeat the word. Simply say the word for them and continue with the game. The child will begin to learn what the word means and may start to use it too.

People Toys

People toys are toys the child will need your help to operate or play. People toys are a great way to encourage the child to communicate and interact with you.

People games may include:

- Wind-up toys
- Bubbles
- Balloons

Tips for people toys:

- ✓ Pause within the routine and wait for the child to show you that they would like the routine to continue. The child may look at you, make a sound, jump or say the word. For example, when you blow up a balloon, and wait, the child may: mime blowing, look at you, or say 'blow'.
- ✓ Avoid asking the child to repeat what you say. If the child feels under pressure to talk, they will be less willing to play with you.



Turn-Taking

Turn-taking with another adult/child in play is an important interaction skill for children to learn. Through these activities, children learn to wait, listen, and share activities with other people.

Tips for turn-taking:

- ✓ Use consistent language to claim your turn e.g. 'my turn', 'Emma's turn'. Describe the child's turn as 'my turn' so if they copy your words it will make sense from their point of view.
- ✓ You could use a picture (my turn/your turn) to show whose turn it is. The adult should also model how to do good waiting.
- ✓ If needed, allow the child to have more than one turn until they are ready to take equal turns in activities.
- ✓ Give lots of praise when the child has waited for their turn.
- ✓ Initially you might want to start with just an adult before involving another child.

Activity Ideas:

- Threading beads
- Building a tower
- Completing a puzzle
- Snap
- Turning over a card and then showing the group
- Taking an object / picture out of a feely bag
- Jumping frogs
- Circle time.

Encouraging Social Interaction with peers

There are many ways in which adults can support children to socially interact with their peers within a setting.

- ✓ Encourage turn-taking. You may need to use visual rules/cues such as objects and pictures to support turn taking.
- ✓ Allow the child to take responsibility for a task e.g. handing out the drinks, collecting in the plates or asking his peers to find their shoes.
- ✓ Accept any interaction the child shows towards his peers whether this is verbal or non-verbal.
- ✓ Encourage recognition of another's needs e.g. child collects his coat and is supported to get another person's coat.
- ✓ Use mutual help activities to encourage interdependency. Find activities where the child may need help from a peer e.g. sharing Mr. Potato Head, putting a puzzle together, fixing Lego, holding a jug whilst another child pours water.
- ✓ You may need to prompt the child with the words they need to use e.g. 'Would you like milk or water?' or 'I need that piece of puzzle'.
- ✓ Find or make up social stories where people work together or where they have had to initiate communication. Social stories are short narratives which explain situations, activities or occurrences. They can be used to provide information to a child around what they can expect when they experience something new or difficult. Please speak with the Speech and Language Therapy Team if you would like more information on social stories.
- ✓ Encourage the child to observe how others behave e.g. 'Look, Sam asked before he took the pen'.
- ✓ During times of social interaction, e.g. snack time, lunchtime or show & tell sessions encourage peers to question each other. This will help the child to develop a catalogue of questions they can use with other children to build their conversation skills e.g. 'Sam what are you drinking?'

Playing with a friend

Social play is an important part of children learning to develop their social skills and to develop friendships.

Children increase in confidence when they have opportunities to practice new skills, and by watching and playing with others in a safe or familiar environment.

Adults can structure play activities to provide opportunities for children to develop these skills. Initially, the adult may need to be present, to model, to scaffold, and to support the children to engage with each other. Gradually, as children's skills develop and they are able to interact with each other more independently, the adult can reduce their involvement, and perhaps watch from a distance.

Adults can:

- Engage two children in identical play e.g. drawing, sticking, puzzles.
- Build a tower where both children can turn take to add bricks.
- Structure activities on equipment and/or toys that require two people e.g. sea-saw, pushing each other in a car, and support the children to help each other.
- Model the use of turn-taking by using specific vocabulary e.g. 'George's turn'.
- Comment on what each child is doing and draw their attention to each other e.g. 'look what Ivan is doing, he's drawing a picture!'

Playing in groups

Playing in groups is important for children to learn new skills through observation of other children.

Playing in groups helps to develop social skills such as turn-taking, eye-contact, negotiation, and conflict resolution. This all forms part of social and emotional learning and development.

Adults can play alongside the children initially. You may also start with fewer children, and gradually increase the group size as children become more able to engage and interact with a number of their peers.

Activities may include

- A pretend tea-party with each child having a toy.
- Play shops where one child is the shop keeper and the others buy food.
- Chase or playground games e.g. 'what's the time Mr Wolf', or 'stuck in the mud'.
- Ball games.
- Race games e.g. three-legged races, obstacle courses, relay races.
- Simon says.

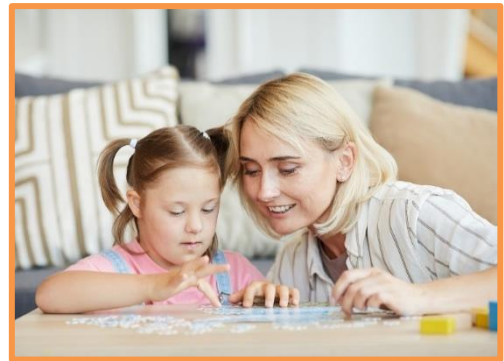
Play

Play is crucial in the development of speech, language and communication skills. Play can also develop other skills including sensory, motor, social and emotional skills.

Children learn best through play because it is fun! When they are interested in an activity, this is when their attention is greatest. Play allows you to watch how the child plays and learns, and provides opportunities to introduce new ways of playing, to model language and for the child to practice using language.

Children learn so many skills when they play, including:

- Social interaction skills including eye contact, turn taking, and copying sounds or actions.
- Use of language and gestures
- Attention skills, including joint attention with others
- Listening & following directions
- Working together
- Flexible thinking
- Understanding someone else's perspective
- Problem solving
- Self-regulation



Stages of Play Development

Children engage in different stages of play throughout their development.

The following developmental milestones are taken from Parten (1933). Children may demonstrate play across a number of these areas depending on their environment, the activity and their peers.

Solitary play (birth – 2 years)

The child tends to explore their environment on their own. They may demonstrate an awareness of those around them but prefer to play independently.

Spectator/Onlooker behaviour (2 years to 2 ½ years)

The child may watch what other children are doing around them, but are not yet sharing play with others, or engaging in joint activities with their peers. Please see **page 47** for advice on supporting turn-taking.

Parallel play (2 ½ years to 3 years)

The child plays next to, or alongside, other children. They prefer to play alone.

Associative play (3 years to 4 years)

The child begins to play 'together' with others, but interaction between the children may be limited. The children may be doing a similar activity but are not yet following a joint plan or working together towards a shared goal.

Co-operative play (4 years to 6 years)

The child plays together with others, demonstrating more social play. The child shows interest both in the activity, and the other children involved. The child works together with others, sharing ideas, communication, and working together towards shared goals. They may assign roles or act out familiar events together. Please see **pages 47** for further advice on supporting play with peers.

Top tips for play

There are many ways that you can support the child's speech, language and communication skills through play.

- ✓ Reduce distraction in the room. Turn off the television, music and the computer.
- ✓ Let the child know you are listening by getting face to face. This lets you know the child is listening to you.
- ✓ Follow your child's lead in play and let them choose activities.
- ✓ Speak slowly using simple sentences. This will help the child understand what you are saying and will encourage them to use new words.
- ✓ Comment on what you or the child is doing or playing with rather than asking questions (e.g. 'oh the dog is jumping' rather than asking 'what is the dog doing?').
- ✓ Play games with the child that requires you to take turns. This will help attention and conversational turn taking.
- ✓ Expand on the child's ideas and model the language alongside this (e.g. if the child repeatedly makes you a pretend cup of tea, introduce teddy and ask the child to make him a cup of tea or if your child repeatedly bangs cups/ blocks you could try stacking these items.).
- ✓ Model the correct way of talking rather than correcting the child
- ✓ Repetition, repetition, repetition! – repetition is crucial to develop new language and play ideas.

Types of Play

There are many different types of play. Children enjoy playing with a wide variety of things – including everyday items, toys, and other people.

You may find children will enjoy different types of play across a range of activities.

People Play/Games

Children learn to engage with and play with other people.

This builds interaction and communication skills which are crucial for academic learning. Many people play activities also involve physical activities, which help develop the child's movement and coordination.

For more information about 'People Games' please see **page 45**.

Sensory and Exploratory Play

Children learn about the world around them and explore different sensory experiences.

Sensory and Exploratory play enables children to become accepting of new sensory experiences (including food), develop different movements, and build coordination skills. To build this, you can try:

- ✓ Banging, shaking, dropping/throwing different objects. Listening to how they differ in the sounds they make, or the way they move.
- ✓ Playing with toys that can be squeezed.
- ✓ Explore different sounding toys, such as musical instruments – rattles, bells, shakers.
- ✓ Play with items that have different textures to touch – rough, smooth, spikey, fluffy. This can also include different food items e.g. dry pasta, dry rice, cooked spaghetti or cornflower, to experience a range of tastes and smells too.
- ✓ Include a range of messy play activities such as sand, water, playdoh or paint.

Cause and Effect Play

Children learn that they can affect things around them and see the result of their actions. This helps problem solving skills.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Play with toys that the child can shake (shakers) and squeeze (squeezy balls).
- ✓ Play with toys that make a noise with the child's involvement e.g. shakers, drum, xylophone, push-button toys.
- ✓ Push along toys.
- ✓ Stack bricks into a tower and then knock them down.
- ✓ Use pop-up toys.



Physical Play

Children use physical movements to play and explore, developing their gross and fine motor skills and coordination, alongside learning.

To build this you could:

- ✓ Sing and act out action rhymes e.g. 'row row your boat'.
- ✓ Introduce rough and tumble play.
- ✓ Play Hide and seek.
- ✓ Ride bikes and trikes.
- ✓ Play ball games.

Construction Play

Children learn how parts fit together and develop co-ordination and movement skills.

This also supports the development of problem-solving skills, and if involved with another adult/peer, can build cooperative play skills.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Play posting games or with shape sorters.
- ✓ Play with puzzles – starting with inset puzzles building to more complex jigsaw puzzle pieces.
- ✓ Build towers with bricks, blocks, or Lego.
- ✓ Put objects in and out of containers or bags.



Pretend Play

Pretend play is important for developing understanding of what objects are used for.

The child learns about real-life situations and begins to recreate these and develops flexible thinking and imagination. Pretend play is a great opportunity to develop language skills. There are many sub-stages within the development of pretend play:

Pretend play with real objects

Children learn and understand the function of objects, and when and how to use them.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Pretend to drink from the child's empty cup before you fill it up.
- ✓ Pretend to speak on a toy telephone, then offer to the child to encourage them to do the same.
- ✓ Use everyday objects e.g. hairbrush, keys, blanket, and model pretend activities e.g. pretending to sleep with the blanket.
- ✓ Encourage the child to model this on an adult too.

Doll play

Children learn to act out the familiar objects and activities onto a large doll/ teddy toy.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Act out familiar object/actions on a teddy/doll/familiar toy character.
- ✓ Model actions such as washing the baby, brushing the dolls hair, putting the teddy to bed.
- ✓ Model appropriate noises alongside the play e.g. when putting the baby to bed you may say 'ssssshhhh', when pretending the teddy is asleep you might pretend to snore.
- ✓ Support the child to act out these actions and play activities on the toys themselves.



Pretend Play sequences

Children learn to act out familiar, everyday actions and routines that they observe within their environment.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Encourage the child to join alongside everyday activities such as washing up, cooking, making tea, ironing. You can encourage problem solving in these situations too e.g. 'oh that's very hot we can't touch that!', 'oops I dropped an egg, lets clear it up'.
- ✓ Model extended pretend play activities to build short play sequences e.g. chop food then cook food, then serve food, wash the teddy then brush his teeth then put him to bed.
- ✓ Extend play sequences to demonstrate new ideas.

Small World Play

Children become more creative and imaginative in their play with smaller figures and may begin to use objects symbolically – where one item represents something else e.g. using a cup as a hat, or a box as a house.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Play alongside the child in their small world play, and comment on what they are doing.
- ✓ Model using small figures in an imaginative way – making characters talk to each other, making cars crash, or animals eat.
- ✓ Begin to model symbolic play by pretending objects are something else. The child may find this funny, and you may need to take the lead to show them that objects can pretend to be something else if we want them to be!

Role Play

Children develop extended, creative pretend play with opportunities to use more language to express their ideas.

To build this, you could:

- ✓ Introduce new ideas to the child's play to broaden their stories and ideas e.g. if they crash their car, you may introduce the idea of needing a recovery truck or changing the tyre to fix the car. If they are playing shops you could pretend to forget your money or need help looking for an item.
- ✓ Model how to expand conversation and language use within play to ask questions, make statements, and discuss. You can also act out emotions and real-life situations.
- ✓ Use dressing up activities to further explore their imagination and creativity – dress up as a pirate in a cardboard box pirate ship, dress up as a superhero helping to save a cat in a tree.



Books and Reading

Sharing books together is a great way to introduce new words and support language development.

Children may not sit and listen to a whole story, but they may enjoy chatting about some of the pictures in the book. Children sometimes like to listen to the same story many times, and the repetition can help them to join in with parts of the story and learn new words.

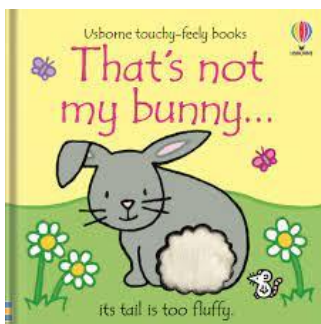
Let the child choose a book that they are interested in. Remember that you can include lots of different written texts in your book corner. Maybe your children would enjoy looking at some non-fiction books about animals, or a train or tractor magazine. Some children really enjoy looking at catalogues or recipe books.

Here are some tips from the 'Words for Life' campaign (<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/activities/sharing-stories-together/>)

- ✓ Talk about the book's cover and point out the title.
- ✓ Let the child hold the book and turn the pages.
- ✓ Encourage them to talk about the pictures.
- ✓ Use different voices for different characters. Add in sound effects like splashing in puddles, beeping car horns or animal sounds.
- ✓ When the story is finished, you could ask them if they liked it and if they had a favourite character.
- ✓ Make a den together, like a cloth over a table, with space for both of you to share. You can make your den part of the story – it could be a monster's cave, a rocket ship, or a princess' tower.
- ✓ Talk to the child about what you did as a child. Involve the whole family – grandparents may have stories to share from when they were growing up!

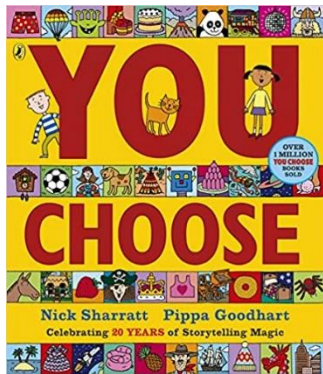
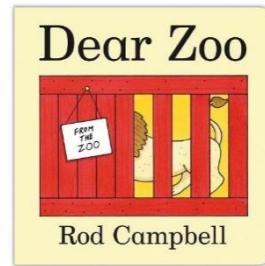
If you need some inspiration about books you could share with your children, have a look at the Bookstart interactive 'Bookfinder' at <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/bookfinder/>

Here are some of our favourites:



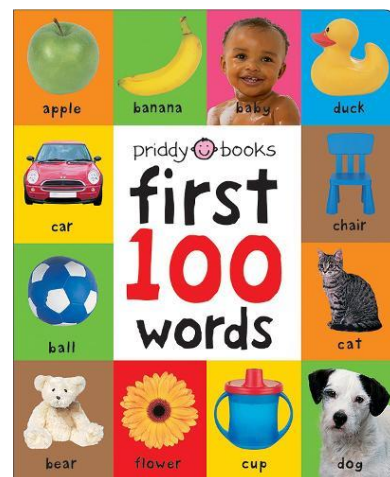
Children may quickly start to join in with the repeated phrase 'that's not my...' and the different textures provide a great opportunity to use some describing words.

A book with opening flaps will give a child the chance to join in. Pause before you name the picture under the flap.

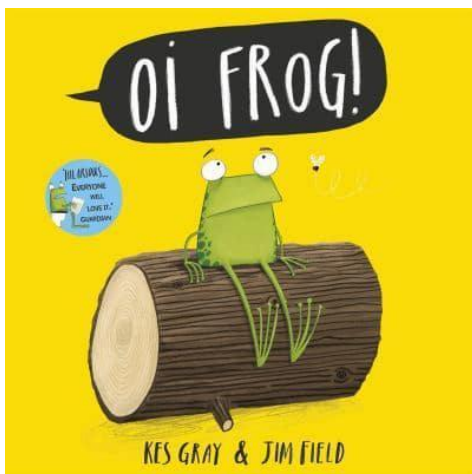


This book is great for taking turns to make a choice and chat about the reasons why you have chosen that item.

Books that contain photos of everyday objects often catch a child's attention. Name the pictures that the child is pointing to or looking at. Repeat a new or unfamiliar word several times for the child to hear.



Rhymes help to develop a child's awareness of sounds and can help them learn to read when they are older. These books are great fun, and some children love making up their own rhymes.



Stammering

When a child learns to walk, they may wobble, stumble and fall, especially in the early stages. Stumbling over sounds and words is a natural part of the process of learning to talk.

Speech is a very complex process involving many different skills. The process starts with having an idea and deciding what to say, then finding the right words to use, building them into a sentence and coordinating the muscles to make the sounds.

Different parts of the brain are needed for speech. In young people who stammer, there are subtle differences in the development of connections between these areas. Therefore, Young people who stammer have a speech system that needs more time to produce speech.

Developmental Dysfluency

About five in every hundred children stammer for a time while learning to talk.

What might you see in the classroom?

- The child may repeat single sounds or syllables several times, e.g. “mu-mu-mumummy”
- The child may repeat whole words e.g. “and, and, and, then I went home”
- They may stretch out parts of words, e.g. “sssstory”
- Some cannot seem to get started and no sound comes out for a period of time, e.g. “.....I got a ball.”
- The child may show physical struggles when trying to speak, such as blinking, mouth contortions, facial tics, grimacing, body tension, foot stamping, fist clenching and shoulder raising
- The child may show unusual breathing patterns, struggling for breath or sounding ‘out of breath’
- The child may avoid some words, which might make some children unable to use specific curriculum vocabulary.
- The child may avoid some situations, such as answering questions or certain activities involving talking in front of others.
- The child may be left out of social groups or have difficulty making friends. They might even be subjected to teasing or bullying.
- The child might appear quiet, shy, aloof, or as though they do not have much to say. This might reflect hidden feelings such as guilt, shame, fear, panic, poor self-image/self-esteem or anxiety.

What can you do to help?

The following ideas may support fluency within the child’s environment and should be used by all adults working with a child.

- ✓ Show you’re interested in what the child says, not how they say it. Look at them when they’re talking so they know you’re listening.
- ✓ Try modelling a slower rate of speech yourself. Concentrate on slowing down and pausing. This will not only help them feel less rushed, it’s more helpful than telling them to slow down, start again or take a deep breath.
- ✓ Pause for a second before you respond to their question. This prevents the child from feeling rushed and reduces the pressure on the child to reply quickly.
- ✓ We all ask questions, and when a child is asked a question, they are expected to respond. Their ability to answer fluently will depend on how difficult the question is and how good their language skills are. Adults can help the child to answer more fluently by:
 1. Avoiding questions which are too complicated for the child

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2. Giving the child plenty of time to think of and give their reply
 3. Avoiding asking another question before the child has had time to answer the first one.
- ✓ When we are in a group, we often overlap or interrupt each other. As such, a child who stammers will often feel that they have to rush to finish what they want to say before they can be interrupted. It is also harder for them to interrupt someone else and make themselves heard. You could help the child by ensuring that everybody listens to each other and nobody interrupts the speaker. They will then feel able to take their time and this can help them to be more fluent.
 - ✓ Resist the urge to finish their sentence for them as this can negatively impact on their self-esteem and increase their level of frustration.
 - ✓ Give praise and try to be specific. An example of being specific, 'You've coloured that in very well. I can see you were very careful.'
 - Notice something good
 - Describe what you have noticed
 - Give the child a word or phrase to add to their list of 'My strong points'

Further Resources

This information has been adapted from information provided by the Michael Palin centre, <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org/michael-palin-centre/>.

Also visit British Stammering Association (BSA) website at www.stamma.org for more information.

Special Time

Special time is a short period of time, that an adult spends individually with a child, normally up to 5 mins – with no distractions (i.e., no phone/screen/radio and not answering the door).

What does it do?

It gives your child quality time spent with you, with you giving them your undivided attention, and focusing on what they enjoy doing.

Why do special time?

It gives your child the opportunity to spend time with you and to use play to help develop essential skills such as attention and listening, turn taking, eye contact, expressive (talking) and receptive (understanding) language skills

How often should I do special time?

Ideally every day. However, if this isn't practical you should aim for about 3-4 times a week minimum.

How do I do special time?

1. Use a quiet room, with distractions kept to a minimum e.g., no TV, radio, no phone and the door shouldn't be answered during this time.
2. Your child should choose the toy/game /activity that he/she wants to do (screen time items/lively outdoor game)
3. Make sure you are on the same level as your child e.g., if they are on the floor, you should be too.
4. If they move, you need to follow them (don't expect them to come to you) and keep on the same level as them.



Strategies to use (not just during special time):

- ✓ Being face to face – your child needs to see your face and vice versa
- ✓ Watch, wait and listen to what your child is doing – watch what they are playing with, listen to what noises/sounds they make and wait for them to respond to what you do/say – this can be very subtle such as very brief eye contact.
- ✓ Copying their sounds/noises/words/actions – whatever they do, you copy – this is also known as 'following their lead.'
- ✓ Comments – using short simple comments about what your child is doing e.g., if they show you a bear, you say 'bear' or 'big bear' or 'cuddly bear'

-
- ✓ Repetitions – your child needs to hear words being said lots and lots of time before they will attempt to use them.
 - ✓ Reduce the number of questions you ask and use the 5-finger rule: ask a question, wait (count to 10 in your head), if there is no response, then give the answer to your own question. Then follow it up with up to 3 comments, e.g., If you ask your child a question such as ‘what is this?’ (a ball), there is no response, you say ‘it’s a ball, it is a big ball, and it bounces, and you can roll it. (This helps to begin to build up a picture of what a ball is, as well as giving more vocabulary and language).
 - ✓ Have FUN and enjoy spending time with your child!

Other suggestions:

Keep a written record of special time (sheet included) so that you can see just how much progress everyone is making.

You could ask someone to record a session of special time on your phone or iPad each week so you can have a visual record of the things that are working well and things that you can change.

Speech Anxiety

Communication and social interaction can be a challenge for a child experiencing shyness, selective mutism (speech phobia) or social anxiety (an intense dread of being watched by others for fear that they will be judged unfavourably). Certain situations can result in panic and a complete inability to speak. These children can talk confidently and fluently when relaxed with their close family or friends, but in many other situations they freeze and do not speak.

How you can help?

These recommendations are based on the principles outlined in 'The Selective Mutism Resource Manual' by Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintgens.

Be Positive and Reassuring

- ✓ As soon as it becomes clear that children are remaining silent in response to questions, have a private chat to reassure them. Say you know that they want to talk but are finding it difficult at the moment. Tell them not to worry because talking will get easier and they don't have to talk straightaway. Ask them to concentrate on having fun and then it will be easier to have a go.
- ✓ Make sure that no adult applies pressure to talk using bribery, persuasion or negative comments. Never force children to say 'Hello', 'Please', 'Thank you' etc. Social conventions are extremely difficult for anxious children.
- ✓ Reassure the child that you won't pick them to answer a question or demonstrate an activity *unless they let you know they want to be chosen*.
- ✓ Create an atmosphere that is relaxed and friendly; help the child to feel valued regardless of any talking.

Build Confidence

- ✓ Look out for children who are stiff or frozen in their facial expression or bodily movements. This is usually caused by extreme anxiety. Physical activity, laughter and making noise can help the child to relax and build rapport.
- ✓ Ideally, identify one adult to form a special bond with the child, gradually building rapport and confidence. Try using special time, playing or doing an activity without demanding speech. Follow the child's lead and focus on attention, showing interest in their choice of activity. Gradually suggest ways of developing the play or activity Encourage cooperative play with comments such as 'why don't we try giving all the animals a ride?' or 'I wonder which one will fit in here?'
- ✓ Include plenty of activities which involve movement, singing or talking in unison.
- ✓ Do not draw attention the child when taking the register- accept a smile, nod or raised hand. You could also repeat "Is ____ here?", so that the whole class gets to know each other as they answer in unison each time.
- ✓ Parents can reduce anxiety of separation by giving their child a possession to look after before they leave. Arrange an early return so that parents can join in and make the last part of the session a positive experience.
- ✓ Give extra smiles and attention when children try anything new. Do things *with* the children or make things *easier*, rather than doing things *for* them.
- ✓ Ensure that children can access the toilet and drinking water without needing to ask.
- ✓ However, do not give special attention for being silent. Reward effort to communicate, help or participate in whatever forms that may take.

Gradually facilitate speech, being guided by the child's response

- ✓ Don't ask direct questions while building a rapport with the child. Instead, chat in the style of a running commentary, with pauses so that children can join in when they feel ready. Be prepared to do all the talking for a while.
- ✓ When the child gestures (e.g. nods or points), talk back as if they spoke to you.
- ✓ When children are relaxed enough to laugh, smile, nod and shake their heads, help them answer questions by providing a choice: "What have you drawn in your picture- is it a flower or a bird?" Smile and allow a full five seconds for them to answer. If they don't reply, move on the conversation in a positive way. "It looks very colourful!" If children struggle to answer near other people, only use the choice technique one to one. If they tense up, even on a one to one basis, return to commentary style chat until they relax again.
- ✓ When children speak, praise their ideas or the way they joined in, rather than the fact that they spoke.
- ✓ Once children have begun to talk, turn gestures into speech by seeking clarification: "I see that you are nodding. Does that mean you want milk or water?"



Further Resources

SMIRA (Selective Mutism Information and Research Association) is a support group for parents and professionals. Please refer to the website www.selectivemutism.org.uk for further information.

Voice

Voice difficulties

A voice problem is where a child has difficulties producing sound. It is unrelated to their ability to form words. not with the formation of words.

Voice difficulties originate in the larynx ('voice box'). This can occur with illness, or misuse. Some children may not use their voice correctly or over-use their voice which causes strain. This can result in lost voice, hoarse voice or a croaky, or breathy voice.

It is important to seek advice from a Speech and Language Therapist if you suspect a child has difficulty with their voice, for further investigation.



Using a better voice

Behaviour and lifestyle adaptations can be successful in improving a child's voice difficulty.

Young children may lack the awareness of their voice to be able to make changes independently, and it can be difficult for them to change their habits without this awareness. It is important that all adults within the child's environment are involved in sharing an awareness of the difficulty and they should support the child to make changes which will improve their voice.

The most helpful thing adults can do is to provide a good role model for using a healthy voice. Where possible, try to make the changes together as a whole group. This will help the child see and hear what is expected, and to see the advice as supportive rather than punishing.

Resting the Child's Voice

Children who are experiencing voice difficulties need to be encouraged to rest their voice. This will need to be supported and encouraged by adults around them.

- This should be for a set period of time, at least once or twice a day (depending on circumstances). Rest periods should last between 5 minutes and an hour (depending on the child).
- An ideal time for voice rest is during a quiet activity, e.g. television programme, reading, doing a puzzle, etc.

Things to Avoid

These activities / habits below can put additional strain on the voice which may worsen the child's difficulties.

- Shouting/screaming/calling out loudly and laughing loudly, e.g. when playing outside, during soft play and when playing with friends.
- Singing/humming, e.g. with music, school concerts
- Raising voice over background noise, e.g. in the car, over others speaking, against music, TV, etc.
- Whispering
- Habitual coughing/throat clearing (unless of course, your child has a cold!) Your child should be encouraged to only throat clear very gently or swallow firmly instead of throat clearing. Offer your child a glass of water if they are throat clearing a lot.

- Making “funny” voices. Lots of characters on children’s TV programs use unusual, strained voices. You may need to explain to the child that this can cause damage to their voice. Try to find a character who uses a better voice and encourage the child to copy this character instead.

Things to Encourage

The child may need reminders, prompts, and encouragement from adults around them to implement the below strategies, which will help them to use a better voice.

- ✓ Use of gesture or mime during voice rest. This will be discussed by your Speech and Language Therapist.
- ✓ Putting hand up in class without noisy intake of breath.
- ✓ Gaining attention, e.g. in P.E. playground by clapping, taping on shoulder, etc.
- ✓ Walking over to a person the child wishes to speak to rather than shouting across a room/playground/upstairs.
- ✓ Good posture (standing or sitting) when talking.
- ✓ Give the child lots of drink every day – mainly water. Avoid sweetened drinks/tea/coffee.

Self-Monitoring

Try to encourage your child to be aware of when they are shouting. Using a quiet voice can be practised when:

- Talking on a one to one basis
- Talking to a small group
- Reading aloud
- Talking at mealtimes

Tips for Parent/Carers and Education Staff

- ✓ Keep your home as quiet as possible. A good model (e.g. no raised voices) will prevent verbal competition and a battleground situation arising in your home.
- ✓ Try to reduce the level of background noise when you are speaking with the child e.g. loud music/TV/washing machine etc.
- ✓ Do not smoke around the child.
- ✓ Dust, fumes, hot and dry atmospheres may all exacerbate your child’s voice problem.
- ✓ Daily inhalations of steam can help the child’s throat if it feels dry/irritable/sore/aching.
- ✓ Share this advice sheet with others involved in the child’s care so he/she can also implement the same advice.

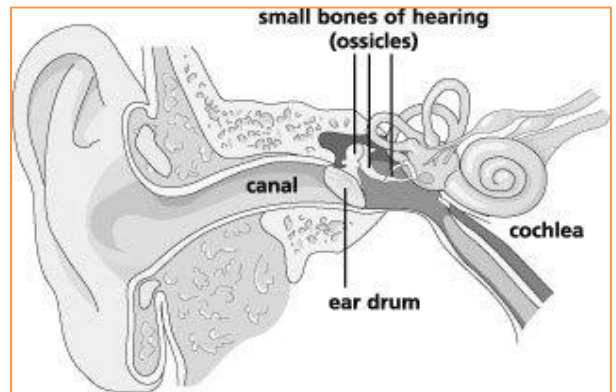
Further Resources

The British Voice Association has various helpful resources on their website at www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

If you think that following any of this advice in this information sheet will cause problems with the child’s other medical care, then please discuss your questions with your speech and language therapist or GP.

Glue Ear

Glue ear is a build-up of thick fluid behind the eardrum. This can stop the eardrum moving normally, causing temporary hearing loss. Glue ear is very common in young children (80% of children under 10 will develop Glue ear at some point). The fluid will usually drain away and clear by itself over time. However, an assessment by audiology can confirm if glue ear is present, if hearing is affected, and/or if there are signs that the fluid might be starting to clear.



(image from www.gosh.nhs.uk)

The following are common signs of glue ear:

- Changes in behaviour which may fluctuate day to day.
- Becoming tired and frustrated because listening is harder.
- A lack of concentration.
- Preferring to play alone.
- Not responding when called or not responding to an instruction.
- Constantly asking for speech to be repeated.
- Says they can't hear.
- Watches face and lips intently.
- May not follow instructions immediately and needs time to process what has been said or may misunderstand instructions.
- Watches what their peers are doing first and then follows suit. May need their friends help to complete tasks.
- Talks too loudly or softly.
- Speech may be unclear and they might be difficult to understand

To make listening easier for the child, you should:

- ✓ Get the child's attention before you start talking by saying their name or tapping them.
- ✓ Get down to their level, stay close, and keep eye contact. Make sure you face the child as much as possible so that they get information from lip patterns to supplement what they can hear. Avoid standing in front of a window or bright light or turning away while speaking.
- ✓ Seat the child near the teacher in the room.
- ✓ Speak clearly, without shouting, and maintain your normal voice level, pace and rhythm of speech. Speaking too slowly or exaggerating what you say will make you harder to understand as this distorts speech.
- ✓ Check that they understand what is said and encourage them to ask for things to be repeated.
- ✓ Make your teaching and activities as visual as possible by using photos and other visual aids.
- ✓ Encourage turn-taking and speaking one at a time during group activities.
- ✓ Factor in plenty of breaks as children with a hearing loss have to concentrate harder than their peers, which can lead to fatigue

-
- ✓ Check that background noise is kept to a minimum by turning off any equipment, like computers and fans, when not in use.
 - ✓ Shut the door or windows if there's background noise outside or from an adjoining room.
 - ✓ Use soft furnishings and fabrics to help improve acoustics.

The strategies above are relevant for a child with any type of hearing loss (temporary or permanent).

If the child has been seen by Audiology and received a diagnosis of glue ear, there will be additional advice on managing this in their report. Please ask parents to share this information with you.

If you are concerned that a child in your setting might have glue ear, please encourage parents to contact their GP.

For further advice and information please look at the following links:

- Deafness and hearing loss | Children Young People and Families Online Resource (berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk)
- Glue ear - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
- <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/childhood-deafness/causes-of-deafness/glue-ear/>
The NDCS website has a helpful video too.

Dump the Dummy

The Dummy Debate...

The use of dummies (also called pacifiers or comforters), has been common practice in many countries for many years. Despite their popularity and long history, the use of dummies is a controversial topic amongst professionals and parents/carers.

Advantages

For parents and carers, the most important advantage of dummy use is their role in helping babies settle down to sleep or to soothe them. Some studies show that dummies can help establish good sucking patterns in very young babies, especially those born prematurely. Some research also suggests that using a dummy at sleep times could reduce the risk of sudden infant death.

Disadvantages:

There are a number of disadvantages associated with the use of dummies, some of which may impact upon the child's speech and language development. The World Health Organisation states that dummy use may encourage the child and mother to stop breast feeding earlier than recommended. Other concerns raised by various professional groups include the increased risk of:

- stomach and mouth infections;
- middle ear infections (otitis media). Sucking opens the Eustachian tube, which links the nose and middle ear, which can allow bacteria into the middle ear from the nasal area;
- dental problems such as open bite and cross bite;
- overdevelopment of the muscles at the front of the mouth compared to those at the back of the mouth. This can may lead to a persistent tongue thrust, causing further displacement of the teeth;
- reduced babbling and experimentation with sounds. When a baby or young child has a dummy in their mouth, they are less likely to copy sounds adults make or to attempt to babble and play with sounds themselves. This is important in the development of speech skills.

How do I help my child 'dump the dummy'?

Try the suggestions below when you want your child to give up the dummy or bottle. Use them at a time when you and your child feel up to it e.g. when you are both well, you aren't trying other skills like potty training & there are no major changes happening in your child's life.

Gear yourself up for it but don't worry it may not be as hard as you think!

Gradually reducing its use:

- Ensure that your child never talks around his dummy, you could say that you can't hear what they are saying
- You could say that dummies are for bed and leave it there when your child gets up or put it away in a drawer- out of sight out of mind?
- Only have one dummy in use...if they are too readily available you will find it hard to discourage your child

Completely removing the dummy:

- 'Father Christmas' & 'fairies' can "magic" the dummy/bottle away and leave a small present in its place
- Cut or puncture the teat so that its "broken" and needs to go in the bin
- "Lose" them or leave them behind when you go away

-
- Ask a friend or a person in authority e.g. a health visitor to explain to your child that they don't need it anymore

Give your child plenty of praise to make them feel that they are doing something positive & grown-up.

Don't worry if you do not succeed the first time, leave it for a while and try again.

Managing Dribbling

Most children can be helped to control their dribbling.

To prevent dribbling, children need to be able to close their lips together, and so this might be more difficult at times when they have a blocked nose.

Building up awareness of how to control dribbling needs a concentrated effort and can sometimes have an impact over a relatively short period of time, with nursery and home working together.

Tips to help you get started:

- ✓ Get rid of/reduce the child's use of the dummy and bottle.
- ✓ Note times when you see the child with their lips closed at play, and managing dribble well, and give them praise and encouragement for this.
- ✓ Dab the child's chin rather than wipe. Wiping encourages the production of more saliva and so is best avoided. Show the child how to 'dab' rather than wipe.
- ✓ At first, an adult will need to remind the child by saying "your chin is wet". Encourage the child to dry their own chin by dabbing using either the sweatband or a tissue. Alternatively, you could place a box of tissues in a prominent place at home and nursery. This would be a short-term measure until they have gained full control of their saliva.
- ✓ Choose certain times when dribbling tends to be worse e.g.: when watching TV, playing to begin helping the child to control their dribble.
- ✓ Use a reward if they keep a dry chin for a 15 minute period in one of the chosen situations. This could be a star so that when they have collected 10 stars, they have a special treat.
- ✓ Gradually the adult should stop telling the child that their chin is wet and perhaps instead use a visual prompt such as calling the child's name and pointing at your chin. Continue to use rewards if they keep their chin dry.
- ✓ Eventually, it should be possible to continue the reward system with no prompts from an adult because the child is beginning to control their dribble by themselves.
- ✓ The approach needs to be used 'little and often' perhaps 15 minutes each morning and 15 minutes each afternoon at nursery, plus a further 15 minutes at home. The child needs to have access to tissues/sweatbands at other times also.
- ✓ For some children approaching 3 years of age, it can be helpful to directly explain how closing our lips and swallowing can help them (and us as adults) to manage the saliva in our mouths, and to prevent us from dribbling.

If there are ongoing concerns regarding dribbling, despite implementing the above strategies, please speak to the child's GP.

Feeding

New foods and food textures may cause children to gag. This is a normal protective reflex, usually triggered when food contacts the base of your tongue.

New foods and textures will take time to adjust to, and children will normally need at least 10-12 tries before they can tolerate something different. This is a normal pattern. Try not to react to this negatively but reassure the child so they don't become distressed.



General advice for feeding

When feeding a child

- ✓ Try to encourage a routine around meal and snack times, e.g. placing in chair, washing/wiping hands, putting a bib on.
- ✓ Ensure that the child is seated securely with their head in the middle & facing forward.
- ✓ Make sure that the child sees, smells and has the opportunity to touch foods that you are offering to them.
- ✓ Always ensure that the child is supervised by a responsible adult when they are eating or drinking.
- ✓ Try not to 'clean' the child whilst they are eating.
 - It is normal for them to make a mess as they are learning to eat and feed themselves. They are unlikely to be bothered about the mess (even if you are). Only wipe when *necessary*.
 - Reassure them if they are uncomfortable with the mess. Have a damp flannel or cloth in view and encourage them to touch it if they need to wipe.
 - Try to distract the child away from the mess if they are complaining or get messy yourself to show them it is nothing to worry about.
- ✓ When wiping the child's face, always ensure the child sees the cloth approach (or feel it if they have a visual impairment) Always try to dab slowly and firmly. Try not to use light or fast movements, as these will be over-stimulating.
- ✓ Make sure you are not trying new foods when the child is tired or you are rushed. Be patient as it takes time for the child to get used to these new experiences.
- ✓ Recognise and respect the child's signals. If their mouth is open for another mouthful, they are telling you to try again.

Introducing Lumps

Please see the below advice for introducing lumpy foods:

- ✓ If the child can eat home cooked puree but is struggling with lumps, very gradually reduce the time you blend to make the texture lumpier.
- ✓ If the child prefers lumpy jar food but rejects your cooking, don't lose heart. Often the lumps in jar foods are softer so try cooking pasta or vegetables for longer to help the child get used to the texture and taste.
- ✓ Try gradually increasing the lumpiness texture of a puree by adding very small soft lumps into purees. For example, cubes of soft-boiled vegetables or soft pasta. Foods such as rice crispies can also be used but ensure they are left in the puree (so they absorb the fluid and soften) before giving them to the child.

-
- ✓ Try a very small serving of the new or lumpy food at the start of the meal, so if the child does gag and vomit only a mouthful comes up. Start with a mouthful or two at each meal, slowly introducing the new texture when they are hungry and more willing to try.

Introducing bite dissolve and soft finger foods

Some children progress onto finger foods first before they can cope with lumpy foods. If the child is reaching out for finger food, try offering bite and dissolve foods first.

Bite dissolve foods are foods that dissolve easily in the mouth when mixed with natural saliva such as Organix carrot sticks, other corn snacks or Kiddylicious smoothie melts. Always try small pieces of these foods yourself to check they melt in the mouth.

Please see the below advice for introducing bite dissolve and soft finger foods:

- Ensure 'round foods' such as banana are cut into long, thin strips rather than discs as this makes it easier for the child to hold.
- Serving soft finger foods such as strips of cooked carrot/sweet potato or grated cheese alongside a favourite food can also work well too. Leave the finger foods there to see if the child will explore or try them between mouthfuls of the food they like.
- Provide guidance to ensure that they do not put too much of the food into their mouth.
- If you need to feed your child, try to hold their hand to help you to do this rather than doing it for them.
- If you are guiding the child to place the food into their mouth, try to place the food towards the side of their mouth. This encourages the child to bite on the food (because they get sensory feedback from the texture of the food) and encourages them to move the food from the side to the centre of their mouth using their tongue. Placing the food in the middle of their tongue may encourage a 'sucking' pattern whereas placing the food to the side will encourage a rotary chew, which promotes effective chewing.

Foods to avoid at this stage:

- Foods that splinter, i.e. shatter into bits in your mouth. For example, breadsticks, potato crisps, rich tea biscuits.
- Foods that crumble into pieces that don't dissolve. For example, digestive biscuits, rice cakes.
- Foods that remain in a lump after bitten. For example, baby biscotti, raw apple
- Mixed textures. For example, runny soup or gravy with pieces of vegetable or pasta, cereal with milk before the milk has soaked into the cereal.

Using Visuals to Support Communication

Visual supports come in many different forms and are a great way of supporting communication; they can support a child's understanding of speech and also their expressive communication.

You can find out more information about each of these visuals throughout the next few pages

- Photographs/Pictures/ symbols
- Objects of Reference
- Key word signing (see page 76)

Photographs / Pictures / Symbols

Visual support cards should be stored and presented by adults to support understanding of spoken language. For example, show the child a picture of their coat to signify that it's time to go outside.

Please note that if you are using this form of visual support **and** are also using PECS, you will need to ensure that the card sizes are different e.g. PECS sizes will be slightly smaller than those used for visual support. You could also make the symbols/pictures that you are using as a visual support a different colour to the PECS symbols. This will help to differentiate between pictures being used to give the child an instruction vs the ones that the child uses to request items they want.

Visual Timetables

Picture cards can be presented in the form of timetables to demonstrate routine and sequences of activities to groups of children. Some children may require specific sequence of visuals called a visual schedule. Visuals such as these are a good way to introduce changes for those children who have difficulty transitioning between activities. Please ask the speech and language therapist for more information on this.

Visual Timetable Strip: These can be used to maintain a child's attention and help them to follow class routines. You can have whole class visual timetables (e.g. on the whiteboard at the front of the room – whereby the teacher controls the placing and removing of activities) or you may choose to have individualised schedules for a child as required.

Individualised schedules are used to reflect the individual child's needs which may differ from that of the whole class e.g. movement breaks/ jobs.

The picture representation can be taken off or crossed out by the child themselves.



Teaching children to follow a visual schedule using physical prompting

When working on independence skills, we can use physical prompting as a strategy to help teach children to follow a visual schedule. Often it feels more natural to give a verbal prompt. However, this can lead to some children becoming reliant on verbal cues, and therefore, stop them from becoming independent. It is much easier to retract physical prompts than verbal prompts.

Before you begin:

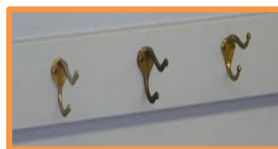
- Identify a set of directions to teach the child and prepare the symbols in advance.
- Only introduce visual schedules for items or activities which are familiar to the child, so he will know what to do with the item or what happens in the activity

Full physical prompting

Begin by showing the child the first symbol by pointing to it. Remember not to give a verbal prompt such as “hang your coat up”, but you may say something like “go here” or “do this”. Physically guide the child to get the item or to complete the activity.

For example:

- Tap the first symbol and say “go here”
- Physically guide the child to the pegs
- Tap the second symbol and say “do this”
- Physically prompt the child to hang up their coat



Pegs



Hang coat

Fading physical prompting

For each symbol you are teaching, gradually fade your physical prompt from the end of the sequence, i.e. physically prompt the child with the first action but do not prompt them for the rest of the sequence. through the beginning of the sequence and stop just before the end.

For example:

- Tap the first symbol and say “go here”
- Physically guide the child towards the pegs but stop a metre or so short and allow the child to continue the sequence (for that symbol) on their own

What you are aiming for, is for the child to see the symbol, go to the pictured location (or corresponding item) and use it appropriately.

First/Next Board:

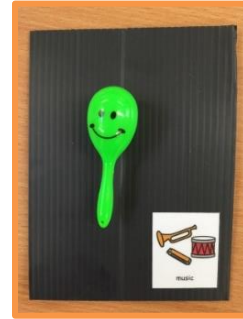
Use a first/next board with pictures (these can be drawings/ pictures/ photos or symbols) which visually represents the order of tasks in a. For example, First Counting, Next Bubbles. Break up each task into manageable chunks to ensure that tasks are short and achievable. Ensure that the ‘next’ task is not reliant on the child completing the ‘first’ task. For example, the child is able to have the bubbles whether or not they finish the counting task. This is to ensure that the child is more willing to complete tasks on other occasions and is not only doing so for the reward.



Objects of Reference

Similar to picture cards, objects of reference are presented to a child to aid understanding.

You may find you need to use objects of reference if the child is unable to recognise or associate with the pictures/symbols or photos.



What should an object of reference be?

- safe (should be safe for unsupervised use)
- hygienic (should be able to be easily cleaned)
- not too big or too small (portable)
- not too heavy to hold/carry
- unique (the child should not be directly encountering the item in other situations)
- durable (they have a tough life and need to last so durable is better)
- available (if they go missing and have to be replaced)
- inexpensive (if they cost a lot to replace it becomes very expensive)
- multisensory (as is practicable and possible but do not have to cover every sense)
- iconic (ideally should directly represent the activity: Concrete rather than abstract. However, **consistency** is more important)
- saliency (has the object of reference got a direct link to an activity which the child finds meaningful).
- adaptable
- property of the child (ideally the set should belong to the child and move between their different environments with him/her)

How to use an object of reference

- ✓ Always present it to the child **immediately before** the change of activity (this avoids confusion or impatience)
- ✓ Try to gain the child's attention by calling their name
- ✓ Use a simple and consistent phrase e.g. "Sophie, it's choice time now" "Look/feel, it's time for choice"
- ✓ Always emphasise and repeat the main word as the object is explored
- ✓ Allow the child time to explore the object to experience and process the information through hearing touch and smell.
- ✓ Where possible the child should hold on to the object
- ✓ Take the object to the next activity and then repeat the phrase above.

Task Planners

A task planner is another form of visual aid a little bit like a visual timetable but used to help a child complete the activities they have been asked to do.

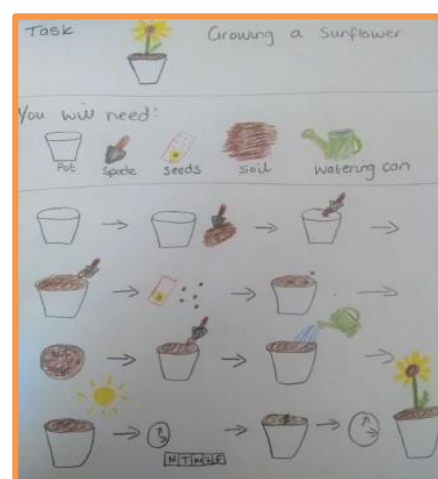
Task plans include visual and written information that breaks down complex tasks for the child. This should not only support their understanding but promote their independence skills in the nursery so they are less reliant upon an adult to give step by step instructions. This can also be used to support the child completing tasks at home, such as homework.

How to use a task plan:

- ✓ Adults should present the plan to the child, explaining the stages involved and new vocabulary where necessary plan to discuss with the child what the task involves, any new vocabulary and the steps involved in completing the task. This provides the child with an opportunity to identify vocabulary that they do not understand.
- ✓ You can create your own Task Plan format and laminate it so that it can be cleaned with a dry wipe marker before / after use/
- ✓ Provide simple step by step instructions and use little symbols or pictures to help the child remember what they have to do. These can be as complex or simple as you like.
- ✓ Encourage the child to refer back to the planner when they lose focus or forget the next step. The child can then tick or rub off each step as they complete it to begin to encourage his/her independence.

Set clear expectations for how long the child should work on the activity for and how much of the activity he/she is expected to complete independently. Start with small steps and gradually increase the time expected on the task. Adults should ensure they identify a point where the child can tell an adult that they have completed their independent steps. For example, the last line of any task plan is 'tell an adult you have finished' E.g. if breaking it down to small steps, the task plan is:

1. Write date
2. Write learning objective
3. Then, the next few steps are put on the task plan, with 'tell adult you have finished' as the last one.
4. You may also use a sand timer to show the child how long they have to complete those steps.




Visuals for asking for help:

A visual can be added to the child's table giving different options available for when he/she does not understand an activity, an instruction, or information provided to them. This helps the child to self-identify when they do not understand, thereby encouraging them to find a resolution independently, by reminding them of the different ways they can seek support within the nursery.


- ✓ The child should be encouraged to identify when he/she needs help, doesn't understand or cannot find a piece of equipment, rather than waiting for an adult to ask them.
- ✓ Praise the child for the times when they have appropriately asked for help, or found their own resolution.

Although asking a teacher is an option, and at times, the most suitable, the child should be encouraged to explore alternative ways to find the information they need. *A visual may include* 'check my task plan', 'ask a peer', 'put my hand up' or 'find a teacher'.

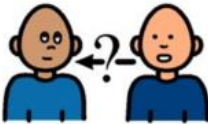


For children with awareness of their difficulties, you could have a traffic light card on their table. They place this face up with the 'green' colour if they are happy completing their work or change this to a 'red' if they need help. This helps the teacher visually check in on children and helps reduce the pressure of asking for help if this is something the child finds difficult.



I don't understand.

I need **help.** 

I can:

- Ask a friend 
- Put my hand up 
- Find my teacher 

Key Word Signing

Why Signing?

We all use natural gesture to support our communication on a daily basis.

Signs and gestures are often used by babies before they can speak, to tell us what they want. For example, they may point at a toy they want, or hold their arms out to be lifted up. Adults interpret these gestures and understand the child's communication attempt.

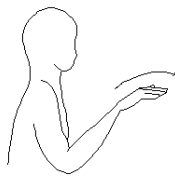
Adults also use gestures and signs within our communication, for example, adults may give a 'thumbs up' to indicate something good, use pointing to indicate direction, and nod and shake their head to indicate 'yes' or 'no'.

Key Word Signing

Key word signing is used alongside speech and is when only the **key** words to enable the message to be understood are signed. They are also signed in the spoken word order. This differs from sign language systems such as British Sign Language (BSL), which has its own grammatical structure and word order. For example:

When saying 'shall we go outside?'

You may just sign: **'outside'**



When saying 'do you want a drink?'

You would sign: **'want'**



'drink'



Facial expression and tone of voice continue to be very important when communicating the message. Both highlight differences between the meaning of the message e.g. if signing 'go home', you may show a questioning face if asking 'shall we go home?', which would differentiate it from the instruction 'lets go home'.

Benefits of Signing

- Signing allows the child to communicate their thoughts, needs, and feelings before they can speak.
- Signing reduces frustration, for the child and those around the child.
- Signing enhances carer-child interaction, encouraging the bond between carer and child.
- Signing helps the development of spoken language. Research shows that babies, who sign, usually start to talk sooner. On average a two year old signer has 50 more words than their non-signing peers.

Tips for Introducing Signing

- ✓ Make sure you have the child's **attention**.
- ✓ Be **consistent** in how you sign. Make sure all adults/family members are using the same signs as each other.
- ✓ Always use the **spoken** word with the sign.
- ✓ **Look out** for any of the child's attempts at signing. They don't have to be perfect, just praise any attempts the child makes to sign.
- ✓ Sometimes it is useful to **show** the child how to make the signs, by guiding their hands as you make the signs with them.
- ✓ Getting down to the **child's level** and making **eye contact** helps them to see you and the signs you are making, more clearly.
- ✓ Introduce signs that will be motivational for the child. Choose signs linked to their interests, likes and dislikes, as well as key signs that will reduce frustration within their daily environment.

Makaton

Makaton is a key word sign and symbol system used alongside speech to support children and adults with a variety of communication and learning needs.

Makaton supports the development of attention and listening skills, comprehension, memory and recall, and expression of language. Makaton can provide a means of communication which helps to reduce frustration and enables children to build relationships with others and understand the world around them.

Further Resources

There are many resources available which demonstrate the use of Makaton sign and symbols.

Makaton <https://www.makaton.org>

Features information about 'What is Makaton', and 'How to use Makaton', as well as useful research and resources. It is possible to purchase Makaton resources via their shop, which also includes lots of free downloads of information and activities. They also publish a 'Sign of the week' on Facebook, alongside other resources.

Something Special/Mr Tumble <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/something-special>

CBeebies' Something Special programme uses Makaton in lots of real-life situations. There are additional resources on the CBeebies web site.

Singing Hands <https://singinghands.co.uk/>

Singing Hands have a brilliant range of resources using Makaton, including DVDs, songs and signed stories. They are also on YouTube 'Singing Hands'– featuring videos based on topic signs, and signing along to both children's and popular hit songs.

If you would like further information on Makaton courses running and would like your staff to attend please email cypmakaton@berkshire.nhs.uk

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction can help children to learn the fundamentals of communication, experience enjoyable interactions and build relationships with the adults they spend time with.

Who is Intensive Interaction for?

Children who do not regularly use 'intentional communication' (e.g. they do not understand that they can use communication to change their surroundings).

The idea is to convey to the child that they are valued and that their company is enjoyed. Also it supports them to further develop their ability to interact meaningfully with others (e.g. by looking, smiling and vocalising).

What happens during Intensive Interaction?

Through play, children will have the opportunity to learn how to communicate. Intensive interaction uses techniques based on the interactions that help to develop early intentional communication skills.

The adult:

- provides a safe environment.
- allows the child to control/lead the interaction through with the adult copying their behaviours.
- use simple and repetitive language to describe what the child can see or hear.
- respond to every behaviour (e.g. to a sound, sigh, smile, movement through 'imitating' or 'copying').

The child learns how to:

- take turns
- make eye contact
- imitate
- understand cause and effect
- attend to an activity
- Explore / experiment
- use facial expression
- enjoy communication/interactions with others



Getting started

Look out for opportunities where you can copy what the child is doing. Let the child take the lead. Try to respond to some of the things they are doing in terms of sounds, facial expression, or body movements in a fun way. You may choose to echo their sounds or mirror their posture. You could join in their game of finger tapping, spinning on the spot or 'don't step on the cracks'.

Look for any reaction. Their face may change. They may stop what they are doing to watch or listen. This will tell you if they are interested and enjoying what you are doing.

Your response may encourage further communication. The child may want you to react differently or want you to repeat what you are doing many times.

If you feel they are not enjoying what you are doing, stop and alter your approach. You could try something different or take a break and approach them again later.

Further Resources:

Please see Appendix for record sheet

For more information visit: www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

PECS is a communication system which teaches the child to initiate a communication without having to copy or imitate (it is unprompted). The child can use PECS instead of, or alongside, spoken language.

A child is taught to give a picture of a desired item to a “communicative partner” who immediately responds by providing the desired item.

The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together to make sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.

Verbal prompts are not used, encouraging immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency.

There are 6 phases of PECS.

Who is it suitable for?

Individuals who find it difficult to initiate interaction successfully.

Top tips for PECS:

- ✓ Prior to implementing PECS, the adults around the child should identify objects/activities which are highly motivating for the child.
- ✓ Those around the child need to create frequent opportunities for practise throughout their day. (See ‘Creating opportunities to communicate’ and ‘Creating communication friendly environments’ advice sheets for information on this).
- ✓ The child’s PECS book should be kept up to date with the required symbols and should be accessible wherever the child goes.
- ✓ PECS should be supported using strategies outlined by Pyramid UK. <https://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/>
- ✓ PECS should be implemented by adults in liaison with a Speech and Language Therapist or another PECS trained individual.

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Communication Boards

A communication board is a visual system which supports expressive communication (getting your message across). The child points to photos/symbols to support communication (with or without speaking alongside).

How are they used?

The adult also points to the board when they speak:

- This supports the child's understanding of what is being said
- It also encourages them to do the same when they speak



The child will learn the meaning of symbols through trial and error because the adult will respond to what they have pointed to, even if they are not sure that is what the child meant. This will help the child to learn the meaning of the symbol for next time.

If the child is unable to use spoken language, the adult speaks the words as the child points (whilst encouraging the child to make attempts by leaving gaps). If the child speaks alongside pointing, the adult repeats back the sentence/words, allowing opportunities to model the correct speech sounds or grammar and to expand their sentences.

A communication board can be adapted to be simple by including few symbols or complex with multiple symbols on the board. For example, you may see a communication board with 8 symbols, or you may see one with 40 symbols.

Some communication boards can be more general e.g., a core board with key symbols such as more, finished, good, bad, help. Others may be specific and specialized to a certain activity e.g., a 'what's wrong' board, an arts and crafts board or pop-up pirate board. At the nursery, staff may choose to have various different communication boards depending on the activity.

Who is it for?

A communication board may be suitable for children with:

- Unclear speech sounds
- Limited or no spoken language
- Word finding difficulties
- Social communication difficulties, as it may help with initiating communication or requesting
- Stress/anxiety

The speech and language therapist will help you identify children who require a communication board and what type of board will support them best.

Top Tips for using the communication board

Model language

As you would with spoken language, it is important to model vocabulary on the communication board to help the child understand the different symbols and to see how to use them. While you are talking, point to the symbols on the board to support your spoken language (e.g. Do you want a drink? - where the underlined words are those pointed to).

Individualise

Make sure that you model language at the right level for the child. For example, model single words if they can only understand single word instructions.

Don't expect them to use the board straight away

Just like talking they need to understand the vocabulary first before they will be able to use the board themselves.

Match +1

Continue to use the Match +1 strategy with a child when using a communication board. This is where you match what the child has said and add one additional piece of information. For example, if the child uses a symbol in their board to say 'car', you could model back 'want car' or 'car stop' or 'car go'.

Update

Ensure that a child's board is up to date with vocabulary that is motivating and relevant. For example, think about activities at nursery or their current interests.

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Appendix 1- Speech and Language Intervention Tracker

Speech and Language Therapy Record Sheet

Name:
Target:

Date	Lesson/ Activity	Input e.g. with who, duration.	Observations/Comments/Progress e.g. amount of support required, amount completed, attention/motivation towards activity, success rate.	Generalisation to the classroom observations of the child using these skills in the classroom

Appendix 2: Attention Autism

Stage 1 – Gaining Attention

The aim: To achieve a child's shared attention willingly

The Bucket



- Support the child to transition with visual prompt (whiteboard)
- Supporting adults to model positive behaviour – If you're in the room, you cannot 'opt out'
- Sing 'Bucket song'
- Model 3 adult-led motivating activities

Stage 2 – Sustain Attention

The aim: To achieve sustained attention to an adult-led activity

e.g. Flour Shaking



- Keep language at a minimum – model key words only
- The child should watch the activity from start to finish, including set up and tidy up
- Take time to admire your creation before packing away

Stage 3 – Turn Taking

Aim: To be able to watch, participate and re-engage.

To tolerate when it is not your turn.

e.g. Umbrella



- Leading adult chooses who gets a turn, model the activity with a supporting adult first
- Model that turn-taking opportunities are limited and sometimes we won't get a turn
- Keep language at a minimum – model key words only

Stage 4 – Table Top Activity

Aim: To observe, transition to a workstation and complete an independent activity





e.g. The Box



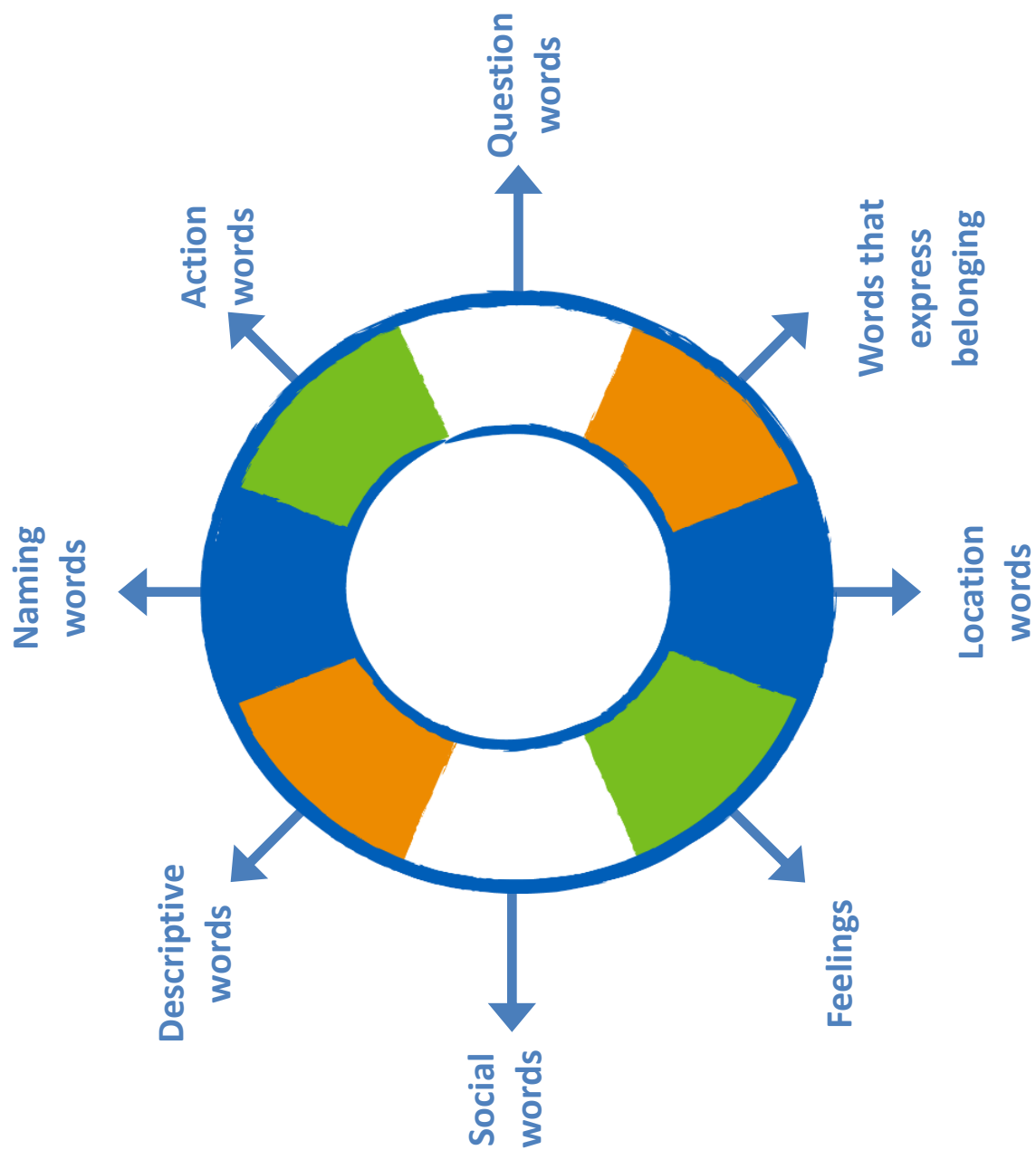
- Leading adult demonstrates activity to the group
- A box of supplies is provided for each child and supporting adult
- Children are supported to transition to a workstation and complete same activity
- Children come back together in a group to share their success!

Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
<p>Flour shaking - shake flour over stencilled shapes and reveal them.</p> <p>Rainbow – Create a row of multi-coloured paints on a sponge and print a rainbow.</p> <p>Cake Splat! – Present silicone cupcake cases and fill each one with shaving foam. Spray food colouring and decorate or Splat! them one by one.</p> <p>Marble run – Build marble runs of varying shapes/sizes.</p> <p>Flour Castles – Use a small container to make sandcastles. Decorate with flags, feathers, etc. Knock them down!</p> <p>Volcano Eruption – Mix baking soda and vinegar in a container.</p>	<p>Umbrella – Have the child sit and hold the umbrella over them. Drop glitter/sequins for ‘rain’ and cotton balls for ‘snow’.</p> <p>Handprint tree – paint hands and print the ‘leaves’ of a tree.</p> <p>‘Day at the beach’ – Fill a row of trays with rocks, shells, sand, water and place a towel at the end. Take off shoes and experience a ‘day at the beach’.</p> <p>Parachute – Sit/Lie the child beneath the parachute while singing ‘the parachute goes up and down...’ to the tune of ‘wheels on the bus’</p> <p>Flour shaking – see stage 2</p> <p>Marble run – see stage 2</p> <p>Jump off a chair/step – Ready... Steady... Jump!</p> <p>Crawl through a tunnel</p>	<p>Juggling Balls – Wrap a handful of uncooked rice in cling film to make a ball. Cut the ends off two balloons. Put the ball of rice inside one balloon. Use the second balloon to cover the hole.</p> <p>Build a tower – Put coloured blocks and a corresponding pattern for the children to copy in each box. Build the tower and knock them down!</p> <p>Playdoh Creatures/Faces – Provide pipe cleaners, feathers, jewels, sequins, etc for decoration.</p> <p>Paper plate Creatures/Masks - Provide pipe cleaners, feathers, jewels, sequins, etc for decoration.</p>

Appendix 3: Blanks Levels of Questioning

Level 1 Naming things		Level 2 Describing, categorising things and answering 'who, what, where' questions	
Matching	Find one like this	Asking who/what/where questions when shown a picture	Who/what/where?
Source of noise	What can you hear?	Sentence completion	Finish this....
Naming objects/people	What's this? Who is that?	Identify characteristics of objects	What size/shape/colour is it? How many?
Naming actions	What are you doing?	Identify object functions/ Give an example	Show me the one we use for...
Imitation	Say this....	Identifying differences	How are these different?
Remembering objects in a book	What did you see?	Naming objects from categories	Tell me something that's a type of....
			
Level 3 Re-telling and talking about events		Level 4 Solving problems and justifying	
Telling a story or describing an event	Tell me what happened?	Justifying a prediction	Why will happen?
Making predictions	What might happen next?	Justifying a decision	Why didn't she go home?
Assuming role of another person	What could she say?	Identify the cause of the event	Why did happen?
State how someone might feel or think	How does she feel?	Solve a problem	What could you do? What could he do?
Following 2 step instructions	Do and then do....	Making inferences from an observation	How can we tell that the girl is frustrated?
Plan and give a set of directions	Tell me how to....	Explaining why something can't be done	Why can't we....?
Find an alternative	Tell me something else we could use?	Select and explain the means to a goal	What else could we use? Why should we use that?
Identify similarities and differences	How are these the same?		
Define a word	What does mean?		

Appendix 4: Vocabulary Wheel



Appendix 5: Typical development of speech sounds

Between 2 years old (24 months) and 2;11 (38 months):

Children will often have unclear speech, with difficulty producing sounds and using sounds in words.

- Strangers should be understanding their child around 40% of the time in conversations.
- Children's speech will often have many errors. They will typically miss chunks of longer words off and find sounds like k, g, tricky. They may have difficulty with using the sounds p, t where they switch them for b, or t. They may also make consonant sounds the same, like "dod" for "dog".
- They may be using sounds like **b, m, n, d, w, h** in short words well by their 3rd birthday.
- Children will be able to make the sounds at the ends of words, rather than missing them off such as "bed" rather than "be".

Between 3 years old (36 months) and 3;11 (47 months)

Children will typically make progress at 3 years old, where their speech will become clearer, and they often can understand more about making speech sounds.

- Parents should be understanding their child around 55% of the time in conversation.
- Children will still have errors in their speech. Such as difficulty using consonant clusters (i.e., two consonants together like "sp" in spider, "bl" in blue, "gr" in green), difficulty with using sounds like "r" "th" "l" in words. Children will often still miss chunks of words, such as "mato" for tomato.
- Children can make the sounds **p, t** in words, rather than using lots of noisy sounds like b, d.
- Children should be able to use the sounds **f, s**, in words by the time they are 3;5 (42 months).

Between 4 years old and 4;11:

- Strangers and their families should understand their speech 75-80% of the time, it will be typical for errors to be present in their speech.
- Children may still have trouble using the sounds ng, ch, l, r. They may still find "sp" "sn" "sw" "sl" tricky in words.
- Children will be able to make the sounds **k** and **g** in words now, rather than using sounds like t or d.
- Children will be making the sounds **z, v** in their words.
- Children should be able to use all the syllables in longer words, such as "banana" "tomato". They should be attempting two sounds together like "tr", "tw", "bl", "br".

By 5 years old

Children will now be able to use the following sounds in words:

- Strangers and their families should understand their speech 90% of the time, although it will be typical for errors to be present in their speech.
- Sounds such as Ch, j (like in jelly), "th" in this (some accents may use "v" or "f" still), "sh" "zh" (like in measure), Ng like in "walking" will become clearer.

- They can do consonant clusters with “s” in their words now.

By 6 years old

- Sounds like **l**, **r**, should no longer get mixed up with sounds like **y**, **w**
- “th” in thumb will be easier to use. Some accents will still use “f”, and this is ok.

There are some errors children make which are not typically seen. For example:

- Missing off the start of words.
- Using sounds like “k” “g” rather than “t” or “d”.
- Inserting sounds, like “uh” into words or at the ends of words.
- Producing words differently each time they are said, such as saying cat as “tat” “kak” “cat” when they try to say the word.

These errors do not mean that these difficulties will last forever or there is anything “wrong” with your child’s development. If you notice that these errors make it difficult to understand your child, please try the advice on page 38. If there are still concerns after implementing the advice, please let your speech and language therapist know.

Dodd B, Holm A. and Crosbie S. (2003) Phonological development: a normative study of British English speaking children. *Clinical Linguistics and Psychology*. 17 pp 617- 643.

Katherine C. Hustad, Tristan J. Mahr, Phoebe Natzke and Paul J. Rathouz (2021) Speech Development Between 30 and 119 Months in Typical Children I: Intelligibility Growth Curves for Single-Word and Multiword Productions. *Journal of speech, language and hearing research*.64 (10). Pages; 3707-3719.

McLeod, S., & Crowe, K. (2018). Children’s consonant acquisition in 27 languages: A cross-linguistic review. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 27, 1546–1571.

Appendix 6: Intensive Interaction Checklist

Name of Client: _____

DoB: _____

Completed by: _____

Date: _____

Location of Session: _____

Length of Session: _____

1. Looking and Eye Contact

1.	Child averts eyes from adult	
2.	Child gives fleeting gaze to adult when they make exaggerated movements and noises	
3.	Child gives sustained gaze when adult makes exaggerated movements and noises	
4.	Child tracks adult when they make exaggerated movements and noises	
5.	Child gives fleeting eye contact when adult makes exaggerated movements and noises	
6.	Child gives sustained eye contact when adult makes exaggerated movements and noise	
7.	Child gives fleeting eye contact to request more of adults actions	
8.	Child gives sustained and alternated eye contact to continue interaction	
	Additional comments:	

2. Enjoyment of Engaging with Another Person

2.1 Child's responses to Adult

1.	Tolerates adult within room when child is engaged	
2.	Tolerates adult within play space	
3.	Tolerates adult playing alongside	
4.	Tolerates adult joining in with their play	
5.	Tolerates increasing person to person engagement with adult	
	Additional comments:	

2.2 Child Initiated

1.	Initiates engagement by placing themselves next to adult		
2.	Initiates engagement by physical means e.g. holding out hand		
3.	Initiates engagement by eye contact		
4.	Initiates engagement by vocalizing		
5.	Initiates engagement by use of speech/symbol/photo/OOR		
	If yes, How?		
6.	Requests repeat of engagement		
	Additional Comments:		

3. Turn-Taking

3.1 Child's Response

		How?			
		Physical	Eye Contact	Vocalising	Other
1.	Reacts to adult when copied				
2.	Reflects back to adult for one turn				
3.	Reflects back to adult for increasing number of turns in sequence				
	Additional Comments:				

3.2 Child Initiated

		How?			
		Physical	Eye Contact	Vocalising	Other
1.	Initiates interaction in structured and predictable context, and waits briefly for response (<i>e.g. adult waiting expectantly with hand held out</i>)				
2.	Initiates interaction with adult looking expectantly, and waits briefly for response				
3.	Initiates interaction spontaneously and waits briefly for response				
4.	Initiates interaction spontaneously and waits for longer periods of time				
Additional Comments:					

4. Facial Expression

4.1 Child's Response

1.	Some reaction shown to adults exaggerated facial expression and vocalization e.g. in anticipatory games	
2.	Reaction shown to exaggerated expression alone	
3.	Reaction shown to look of surprise e.g. open mouth and raised eyebrows	
4.	Reaction shown to smile	
Additional Comments:		

4.2 Child's Use of facial expression

1.	Used in response to adult action	
2.	Used in anticipation of adult's action	
3.	Used to initiate interaction e.g. smile to gain adult's attention	
	Additional Comments:	

5. Attention

1.	Attention is held momentarily by whatever is the dominant stimulus in the environment	
2.	Directs own attention for brief periods	
3.	Directs own attention for increasingly sustained periods	
4.	Can be focused by an adult for short, specified activity – needs constant help from the adult to transfer attention from instruction to activity	
5.	Can be focused by an adult for a short specified activity – able to alternate attention between instruction and activity	
6.	Attention can be sustained for increasing periods of time (i.e. for part of a task within an adult-directed activity)	
7.	Attention can be sustained for the majority of the period of the task with minimal adult support	
8.	Attention can be sustained for the entire task with minimal adult support	
9.	Attention for the entire task with no adult support	
	Additional Comments:	

6. Additional comments to be made about the following with regards to progress within therapy

Length of interaction sequences and frequency	
Level of participation	
Variation in interaction	
Amount of imitation	