

Listening and Understanding

Model good listening such as maintaining eye contact and expressing interest in the speaker. Let your child see that you give your full attention to people who are talking to you.

- Play listening games with children. Games such as 'I spy with my little eye...' offer endless opportunities to play sound games where the same/different sounds of words are highlighted.
- Play treasure hunt games where children must listen to and follow a series of directions. Games such as 'Simon Says' offer opportunities for children to learn specific concepts.
- Sing simple songs and recite nursery rhymes to show the rhythm and pattern of speech.
- Encourage your child to listen to stories without pictures or props.
- Tell jokes such as knock, knock jokes or nonsense rhymes to help children understand humour and play with words.
- Provide new and different experiences that expand receptive vocabulary like trips to gardens, museums, plays, visitors and objects to explore. Afterwards, have your child describe their experiences in their own words.



Language for Thinking

Engage children in conversations about events, experiences, or people that are beyond the here and now—events from the past, the future, or children's imaginations. Such interaction requires children and adults to use more complex and varied vocabulary in explanations, descriptions, narratives, dialogue, and pretend talk.

- Play riddle games where children need to guess the object from clues. Offer a description or clues, and have your child identify what you are describing: "We use it to sweep the floor" (a broom). "It is cold, sweet, and good for dessert. I like strawberry" (ice cream).
- Engage in role-play with your child and encourage them to take on different roles. You can use movies, cartoons or stories as inspiration. You can act out a scene together, and/or make up a different ending. Use props to support the role-play.
- Encourage your child to put on puppet shows or plays with his or her friends.
- Help your child understand and ask questions. Play the yes-no game. Ask questions such as "Are you a boy?" "Are you Marty?" "Can a pig fly?" Encourage your child to make up questions and try to fool you.
- Use question words such as 'how', 'why', 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'who' and encourage your child to do the same.



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Supporting Young Children's Language Development



Nurture Your Child's Language Development

Language is a vital skill necessary for your child to reach his or her full potential. This leaflet outlines some of the ways that you can support your child's language development.

- Recognise that your child is an individual. Avoid comparing your child's language abilities with those of anyone else.
- Use good speech that is clear and grammatically correct for your child to model.
- Encourage your child to talk with you -- to share ideas, express opinions, describe or explain events or things and to ask questions
- Model paraphrasing for your children. Occasionally ask them if they can convey the same idea using different words.
- Involve your whole family in developing children's vocabulary. As a family you might target a word a day to develop vocabulary. Share with your children sentences in which you saw or heard the words used. Occasionally work them into conversations.

For more information about children's language development, visit <http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk>.

Speaking and Communicating

First and fore mostly, engage in one-to-one, extended conversations with children about their personal experiences or events.

- Respond to children's speech with expansions and questions that point out causes and consequences.
- Encourage children to use words such as 'because', 'and', 'but' or 'so' to link thoughts and expand on ideas.
- Use "information" talk to describe what children are doing when playing, and invite their comments. For example, say "Johnny, you are putting lots of blocks on your tower. I wonder how you'll keep it from tipping over."
- Use photographs of familiar people and places and retell what happened or make up a new story.
- Encourage your child to use technological devices to communicate to family members and friends.
- When reading books together, encourage your child to anticipate key events and respond to the story with relevant comments, questions or actions.



Chatter Matters

Take advantage of daily activities for opportunities to talk and develop vocabulary.

- For example, while in the kitchen, encourage your child to name the utensils or ingredients needed. Talk through the different parts or stages of cooking while you cook or bake together.
- Discuss the foods on the menu, their colour, texture, and taste. Where does the food come from? Which foods do you like? Which do you dislike? Who will clean up?
- Talk about spatial relationships (first, middle, and last; right and left) and opposites (up and down; on and off).
- While shopping for groceries, discuss what you will buy, how many you need, and what you will make. Discuss the size (i.e. large or small), shape (i.e. long, round, square), and weight (i.e. heavy or light) of the packages.
- The television also can serve as a valuable tool. Talk about what the child is watching. Have him or her guess what might happen next. Talk about the characters, their feelings and events. Ask your child to tell you what has happened in the story or what their favourite part was and why.

