

Top Tips to Develop Early Communication Skills

Attention, looking and listening, eye contact and turn taking are all key 'building blocks' for language development - they are essential for further development of understanding and talking.

- ✓ Watch, wait, listen and respond.
- ✓ Be face to face with your child and as your child gets older, get on the floor and play face-to-face games
- ✓ Use all forms of communication, not just speech e.g. gesture. Lots of facial expressions are also good.
- ✓ Keep communication fun.
- ✓ Give your child things to look at, explore and play with.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to play sound games with your child, e.g. blowing raspberries - it won't harm your child's speech development and they love it.
- ✓ These skills will develop more slowly in children who do not have opportunities to practice them or whose learning/development is delayed.



Getting Ready

- Set aside a little 'special' time each day to do some of the activities suggested. It need only be 10 minutes - the key is to do this little and often.
- Try to make sure you are in a quiet room with the minimum of distraction. It is always best if the TV is switched off.
- Choose a time when both of you are relaxed, not tired, upset or hungry.



Top Tips

- ✓ Give your child lots of praise - be specific e.g. "Good listening", "Good sitting" etc.
- ✓ Avoid asking too many questions as this puts added pressure on your child. Don't ask them "what's this?" - they won't know unless you tell them!

- ✔ Repeat and add words to what your child says to help them learn new words. For example your child says, "Car", you say, "Yes, blue car".
- ✔ Don't worry if your child does something with the toy that you did not plan - follow their lead and talk about what they are doing.
- ✔ Keep your language simple and easy to understand.
- ✔ Wait for your child to start the interaction and give them extra time to talk if they are trying to.
- ✔ Look out for your child's first words - they might not be what you expect and the probably won't sound quite right. Say back what you think you heard with a happy expression.

- ✔ Offering choices is a good way to encourage your child to say new words without them feeling as if they are 'performing' for you.



Use routines to develop language - give your child names of items during familiar routines, for example, washing and dressing:

E.g. Adult labels: "**wash hands**", "**socks on**". This way you are keeping your language very simple so your child can understand. As they know the routine they can also focus completely on the language you are using and the activity they are doing.



- ✔ Turn taking activities can help to motivate children to use their language skills

Cooking - take turns stirring the mixture.

Gardening - take turns to water the plants.

Bath time - splash and wait for your child to copy you.

Lift the flap books - look at the pictures together.

Toys - take turns to roll a ball to each other, pop bubbles or activate a push & go toy.



- ✔ Don't force your child to take turns. They are learning just by watching you. Give your child time to copy you!