



Do you have concerns about your child's speech, language or communication



A good starting point



Things I can try at home

Who can help with my child's...
Speech, language or communication



Health visitor



Childcare settings



Children's centres and local groups



A good starting point

The following web sites give advice, ideas and information to support parents in developing their children's speech, language and communication skills.

1. www.wordsforlife.org.uk
2. www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
3. www.talkingpoint.org.uk
4. www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby



Things I can try at home

Introduction

There are lots of things you can do to help your child develop their talking. These ideas include short, fun games you can play together which can build up your child's listening skills, their understanding and their use of words. They include 'tips' of little things you can do to help, such as being face to face when you talk together, this can make all the difference in the way your child listens and learns. There are also ideas on ways to help your child learn and pick up new words during every day routines such as bath time or when you are out shopping or loading the washing machine!



Listening games



Cooking



Catalogues



Bubbles



Bath Time



Nursery Rhymes/Songs



Washing Machines



Tea Party



Shopping



Ready Steady Go



Listening games

Children need to learn to listen to sounds and words before they can start using them.

For all children:

1. 'What can you hear?'

Turn off the telly and the radio and play 'being quiet' for one minute (with your fingers on your lips) - what sounds can you hear together? Point out sounds like the washing machine, a tap running, cars outside, fridge humming.

You can also play this game outside or if you're going for a walk (cars, planes, dogs barking, leaves rustling etc..)

2. Stepping stones!

Put cushions on the floor like stepping stones and ask your child to wait for the noise (you can use anything to make the noise eg: a drum, saucepan and spoon, clap). Encourage your child to listen and wait then when they hear the noise they can jump onto a cushion. Then wait again and jump on the next cushion when they hear the next noise.

(if you have an empty cardboard box you can play 'jack in the box' so your child jumps out of the box when they hear the noise!).

3. Hide the clock

Hide a ticking clock or another noisy musical toy somewhere around the room so your child has to listen carefully and find it.

For older children:

4. Stories

When they are listening to you read a familiar story ask your child to listen out for the name of one of the characters or an animal. Give the character or animal an action or sound. Each time the child hears the name of the character or animal they must make the sound or do the action.

Eg: every time they hear 'bear' they make a growling sound or every time they hear 'monkey' they swing their arms like a monkey.





Cooking

Making food together is a great way to learn new words.

Try:

- Giving your child a plastic bowl and some wooden spoons and maybe some dry pasta while you are making a meal so they can 'join in' with you. Talk about what you are doing using words like 'mixing' 'stirring' so your child can copy what you are doing and saying
- If your child has a play kitchen or play food then move it into the kitchen so you can chat together while you are both making a meal!
- Make a sandwich together. Your child will start to learn words like 'butter', 'ham' or 'cucumber' as well as the 'doing' words like 'cutting' 'spreading' 'peeling' 'on top'
- Most children will love making cakes or biscuits. Talk about what your child is doing as you cook. Remember that children need to hear everyday words like 'bowl' 'mixing' 'measuring' lots of times in many situations before they can start to use them themselves





Catalogues

This is a great way to help children learn new words in a fun way – **they love to cut and stick!**

Find a catalogue that you've finished using, with lots pictures of different household items, toys or clothes eg: washing machine, bike, towels, pillows, jumper, coat, teddy, chair, spoons etc....

Have a look through and watch what your child is interested in. When they point to a picture, name it for them and help them cut it out and glue it onto a piece of paper.

You could take a turn at choosing some pictures too – try to choose some everyday things that you think would be useful for your child to know the word for.

When you have about 10 pictures stuck on the paper, help your child cut them out and you have a set of picture cards to talk about.

With younger children, look at the pictures and talk about them and see if you can find the real item in your house.

For older children, try playing this guessing game:

Put the pictures face down in a pile. Take turns picking up a picture (without showing it) and describing it for the other person to guess. Eg: Adult: 'something soft and fluffy, you find it in the bathroom; you use it to get dried' Child: 'a towel!'

At first you will need to help when its your child's turn to do the describing, by asking them questions eg: 'what does it feel like?' 'what do you use it for?' 'where do you find it?'





Bubbles

Children of every age love to play with a simple pot of bubbles

There are lots of ways to use bubbles for learning to listen and talk

For younger children:

- Play ready , steady...go! Before blowing the bubble – encourage your child, to look, wait and listen for GO! before they pop the bubble or
- POP! As your child bursts a bubble say 'POP!'. This is an easy word for your child to listen to and its fun to say, you may find it becomes one of their first words! When you have said 'POP!' on lots of turns, wait when they pop the next bubble to give your child a chance to say the word if they are ready

For older children

- Popping game. When you have blown some bubbles say a body part (eg: elbow, foot, nose, ear or knee) and see if your child can pop the bubble with that part of their body!
- Use words such as 'blowing' 'high' 'up' 'down' to talk about whats happening
- Talk about what happens when you blow the bubble 'gently' eg: its getting 'bigger' or what happens when you blow 'fast'





Bath time

Bath time is a fun time to chat and play.

- Sing songs together like 'this is the way we wash your toes, wash your toes, wash your toes...' (to the tune of Here we go round the mulberry bush). If you sing these each time your child will soon start to join in and learn their body parts!
- Use plastic tubs and jugs to play pouring games. With younger child use words like 'more' 'gone' 'splash!'. Older children will be ready to understand words like 'full' 'empty' 'pouring'
- Put a plastic doll or figure in the bath with a sponge/flannel. Children will enjoy washing the 'baby' and it's a good time to talk about what they are doing eg: 'washing baby's hair' 'washing baby's feet' etc..





Nursery rhymes/songs

Singing songs and rhymes helps children listen to sounds, words and sentences so that, when they are ready, they will start to join in themselves.

Sing songs/rhymes like:

Incy wincy spider
Wheels on the bus
Old macdonald
Dingle, dangle scarrescow
Row, row, row the boat

It is important to:

- Be face to face so that your child can look, listen and copy you more easily
- Make the words jump out by saying them with lots of expression
- Do the actions while you're saying the words eg when you are singing wheels on the bus, make a round and round gesture with your hands when you say those words, this will help your child understand the words and it may encourage them to join in
- Repeat the same songs/rhymes again and again every day if you can. Repetition is the key to the child being able to join in

For older children:

- Wait at the end of a line or sentence to give your child the chance to join in and fill in the missing word

Eg: The wheels on the bus go round and round all day

Don't worry if your child doesn't say the word, after you've waited just say the word for your child, they might be ready to say it next time.





Washing Machine/tumble dryer game!

Sort out the washing together!

This is a good chance for your child to learn new words and practice using them.

For younger children

When you are emptying the washer/dryer sort the clothes together. Name the clothes as they put them in or get them out eg: 'socks' 't shirt' 'pants'.

(Don't worry if you sound like you are saying the same thing over and over, that's a good thing! Children learn words best when they hear the same words many times)

For older children

Sort the clothes into piles for who they belong to

Eg: daddy's sock, ben's sock, ben's t shirt, lilly's trousers

This helps the child hear 2 words together.

It is important to:

- Repeat the words
- Leave long pauses to give your child a chance to say the words or repeat after you if they want to
- Reduce the pressure on your child. Instead of asking them a question eg: whats that? – just wait long enough to see if they say it and say the word for them if they don't





Tea party

Have a teddy bear picnic or toy's tea party. This is a very old game that children have always enjoyed!

Sit in a circle and encourage your child to give out plates and cups to the toys. Then give out play food or pretend food.

For younger children:

Talk about what's happening using simple sentences eg: 'dolly's cup' 'woody's plate' 'yummy banana!'

For older children:

With older children you can use more words eg: 'teddy eating his banana' 'Ben's pouring the juice'.

Give your child choices eg; 'banana or grapes?'





Shopping

When you are in the supermarket, give your child an item to find. Eg: when you are in the fruit aisle: 'We need bananas' or in the dairy aisle 'Where's the yogurt?'

When they find it, give them lots of praise and make sure your child hears the word many times: 'You've got bananas!' 'put the bananas in the trolley' 'lots of bananas!'

With older children, give them more difficult things to find! Eg: 'Find a pineapple' ' Look for flour'.

You can play shopping at home too!

Children love it when you set up a 'shop' in the kitchen – put a few packets/items in a row eg: cereal, apples, potatoes, pasta, raisins.

Give the child a 'shopping bag' and ask them to go and buy food. You could pretend to have a till too where they pretend to pay for their food. Start off asking them to buy one item, if they can do that give them 2 items to find. This is a good listening and remembering practice. Eg: 'We need pasta and a banana'

You could ask them to repeat back the items to help them remember

'What do we need?'

Child: 'Pasta and banana!'

Your child may want to take a turn being 'behind the till' while you go shopping. Ask them to help you find items in the shop.





Ready Steady... Go! games

This game helps the child start to look at you, wait and listen carefully to the words. These are all skills needed for good listening and talking.

You can play this game with many different toys

Eg: building bricks, marble run, push button pop up or musical toys, balls and cars

The important thing is for your child to wait for Go! before doing the action.

- Knocking down the tower

Take turns building a tower of bricks with each of you adding one brick at a time 'mummy's turn' 'ben's turn' etc . When its high enough ask the child to wait then say 'Ready .. steady...!' in an excited voice then wait a few seconds. When you say 'Go!' the child can knock the tower down.

Remember to

- sit face to face with your child to make it easier for your child to look at you, wait and listen to you
- at first keep the waiting time short until your child gets used to this game
- Play this Ready Steady Go! Game with lots of other toys eg: before letting the marble drop down the marble run, before pushing the car down the ramp
- Play 'Ready steady go!' games outside eg: encourage your child to wait at the top of the slide for you to say GO! Before they slide down.





Child Care Settings

Does your child attend Early Years childcare such as a playgroup or pre-school?

If yes, then contact your child's key person to discuss some ideas of how you can support your child together.

Unique child

- The key person should complete a progress summary sheet and share ideas with how parents/carers can support their child at home and what the setting will do to support your child
- The key person should complete a 'Speech, language and communication' informal assessment of your child using the 'Child Monitoring Tool' to identify strengths and also areas in which your child may need extra support
- Practitioners will support children's home language and reinforce that English should not replace the home language but be learned in addition to the new language skills children are acquiring
- The key person will support you, with your permission, to access health visitor services or any other services needed for your child's speech, language and communication

Positive Relationships

- The key person should be giving you regular feedback about your child's progress and raising any initial concerns with you
- The key person should also provide you with ideas for activities to try at home with your child to support their speech, language and communication development
- The setting will work to build positive relationships with all parents/carers and support those with English as an additional language to learn more about your child's competency in their home language
- The setting will work with other professionals to support your child's developmental needs
- The key person will keep up to date with new ideas to support children's language by attending training and accessing Leicestershire County Council's website for further information





Child Care Settings

Enabling Environment

- The setting will aim to provide a language rich environment to stimulate children's speech, language and communication development
- Practitioners will support children's language and communication using a range of strategies and resources, often relating to the child's interests
- The setting will promote progress in language and communication through daily routines, planned activities and using the indoor and outdoor environment

Learning and Development

- All children will have planned communication and language opportunities appropriate to their developmental level
- Practitioners may invite your child to attend a play based language and communication group during their time at the setting
- Practitioners will plan communication and language 'next steps' in learning for your child based on their interests and developmental level

If you have further concerns, please speak to your health visitor as a first point of contact.

For information about free 3 year old childcare places please click [here](#).

For details about funding eligibility for 2 year olds please click [here](#).





Children's Centre and other local groups Support

Your local children's centre can offer support and advice on how to help your child's talking and communication skills.

Your centre may run groups which you could attend with your child. There are different groups in each area but look out for groups such as: Chatterbox, Chatterbabies, Speakaboo, Lets Get Talking, Babbleback, Brightstart, Play and Learn, Happy Toddlers, Toddler talk, Little gigglers and PEEP.

All these groups give advice to help your child develop through playing, talking and singing.

Contact your local [children's centre](#) to find out which groups are available for you and your child in your area.

Other Local Groups Support

Contact the [Family Information Directory \(FID\)](#) to find out about other support available in your area. This may include local groups such as Wiggly readers at the library which can give you advice and ideas about supporting your child's speech, language and communication development.

