

Guidance for Parents

Helping your child at home: Communication and Language

In the first five years of your child's life they will learn more about speaking and words than at any other time. Talking about what they and you are doing, whether at home or out and about, is the most valuable thing that you can do.

Ideas to support your child's communication and language at home

Value talk - Fully engage with what your child has to say and show you value their contribution. When your child wants to tell you something make time to listen. Stop what you are doing, get down to their level and make eye contact and by giving them your full attention they will know that their talk is important to you.

Talk time - Put aside time each day for talking together. Encourage your child talk about their day. Ask real questions that you want to hear the answer to, like how they felt or what they enjoyed the most. Include your child in everyday activities such as cooking and cleaning and use this as another opportunity to talk.

Story time - Make time to read and share stories with your child as often as you can. Talk about the pictures and encourage your child to join in with familiar stories. Read and talk about favourite stories and make story time fun.

Sing songs and rhymes - Singing songs and rhymes are great for helping children to develop early language skills. It provides opportunities to learn new vocabulary and encourages your child to use their voice to communicate. If children know eight nursery rhymes off by heart by the time they're four years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're eight.

Pretend play - Encourage and join in with your child's play letting them take the lead. Children learn language through play and they feel more comfortable to express themselves when they are involved in play. They enjoy taking on roles and acting out different situations.

Play games - Games are fun and are a great way for children to interact and develop language skills. Introduce games with rules, such as 'snakes and ladders', where children need to take. Also Play games with sounds and rhymes, such as I spy.

Explore words - talk about new words when your child comes across them. Hearing and using new words lots of times will help your child to learn them quickly. Consider introducing a word of the day - this is an activity that the whole family can get involved with.

TV time - if your child watches TV, watch it with them as much as possible. This can spark conversation and provide new vocabulary. By limiting screen time and turning off the TV or other background noise you are making room for talk.

[Website links for parents and carers supporting Communication and Language](#)