



# Speech and Language in Childcare Centres

## Talking Matters

Speech Pathology

Helping your children reach their potential

[www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au)

Ph 8255 7137



# An information pack for childcare workers

Thank-you for downloading this pack for childcare workers who support children with additional learning needs. The number of children who need additional support is growing (approximately 10%) and every centre would now have a number of children with additional needs. We have long been aware of the lack of access to speech pathology services within childcare centres so we have put together this pack of information as a starting point to help childcare staff.

This pack provides some basics on speech and language to help those who work with children to get started on understanding communication development. There is also information about typical development by age, and some information ready to share with parents as needed. It is **not designed, or suitable to use as a substitute for professional speech pathology services**. In fact we are hoping by providing this free information that more people will begin to understand the importance of **children receiving early, professional support** from a speech pathologist when there are concerns about their development.

We would also like to encourage childcare centres in the northern suburbs of Adelaide to become familiar with the free information available on our website and what we can offer in services. We also extend an invitation to childcare directors who are looking for a point of difference in their centre to consider working with us to offer families the option of private speech pathology services **at your childcare centre**. This option may be extremely attractive to families who work fulltime and have difficulty making appointments. Our speech pathologists can not only assist you in providing more accessible services to children in your care, but can also assist in **building the skill level of your team at no cost to you**. Sessions are funded by parents and many have access to programs and funding to assist them in meeting those costs <http://www.talkingmatters.com.au/costs/funding>. All you need to provide is a space for us to work in and an interest in providing better services for the kids with special needs in your centre. We also need a cluster of 3 or more children to get started (not hard to do when we work together).

We hope you find this pack useful and that it motivates you to consider offering a speech pathology service in your centre. We have a limited amount of staff time available to develop such services for 2012 so don't delay in registering your interest to avoid disappointment.

Talking Matters is a speech pathology practice in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. We have a team of over 6 speech pathologists working from schools, preschools and our offices in Elizabeth East. We work with a large range of children aged from 18 months to 18 years. We can assist children with speech, language, fluency, (stuttering), Autism, Aspergers, Down's Syndrome, Global Developmental Delays, behavioural issues and more.

Working with us is easy. Just call Carla on (08) 8255 7137 for a confidential discussion.



Clients are able to make an appointment by phoning our office on Ph 8255 7137 and no doctor referral is necessary.

Talking Matters Team



*Helping children reach their potential*

# Language skills by age



# Communication tips for two year olds

*Two year olds are active and sociable and “into everything”. From around two years children go through a period of rapid growth in their communication skills, developing from a toddler experimenting with combining words to a three year old who can use sentences and hold simple conversations. Children who communicate better, interact better with others and manage their emotions and behaviour more effectively, so there are pay offs in the long run for helping your child develop good skills now. Here are some ideas to develop your child’s communication skills.*

Two year olds should be using at least 50 single words and putting short phrases of two or three words together. Their speech should include a range of different speech sounds though they may not use them correctly in all words. Not everything that they say may be clear and they may still use some babble when trying to express themselves but familiar people should understand much of what they say.

## **By two and a half years children can understand:**

- what things are used for (what goes on your feet?)
- simple concepts such as big/little, hot/cold, in/out
- the difference between “he” and “she”
- follow simple instructions “find your shoes”

## **By two and a half years children can say:**

- many single words and two word combinations
- some describing words “big”, “hot”
- ask some simple questions “what’s that?” ”where’s Dad?”
- use words for possession “mine, my teddy, daddy’s shoe”
- use plurals “two dogs”
- answer yes/no, what and where questions.



## **To help your child develop word combinations:**

**1. Build a solid base of single words.** Children usually need around 50 single words before they begin this stage. Even after they begin to use two words they will need to continue to learn more single words to continue to develop their language skills. It is usually easier to learn a new word as a single word at this stage e.g. “zebra” then later combine it “baby zebra” “zebra eating” etc.

**2. Develop a variety of word types.** Children begin by learning lots of names of people and things. To develop two word combinations they often need to combine these nouns with a different type of word such as an action word or a descriptive word. Action words are particularly important as they form the basis of sentences later on.

## **Help your child learn a range of different words including:**

- action words: eat, sleep, jump, dance, run;
- describing words: big, funny, sad, hot, wet;
- position words; up, in, under,
- possessive words: mine, yours,

# Communication tips for two year olds (cont.)

**3. Expand the single words your child does say by adding another word.** Try to repeat it a couple of times if you can.

Sometimes you might add another word you know they can say e.g. Child “bye” Adult “**bye Dad**, Dad’s going shopping, **bye Dad**”. Sometimes you might add a new word. Child “more” Adult “toast, **more toast**, you like the toast, **more toast**.”

Your child does not need to copy you, just hearing what you say will help and they will use that phrase when they are ready. If they do try to copy you though, respond positively. If what they say is not clear still be positive and say it again clearly for them. E.g. child “more toat” Adult “yes **more toast**”.

**Practice games and activities where you can repeat word combinations over and over a number of times.**

Activities could include;

- Bath time: wash + body part “wash face, wash arms, wash tummy”
- Mealtime: eat + food name “eat peas, eat carrots, eat meat”
- Dressing: clothing name + on “shirt on, pants on, socks on, hat on”
- Ball play: action + ball “roll ball, push ball, kick ball, catch ball”
- Car play: car + action/position “ car go, car stop, car up, car in, car down”
- Block play “build up, more blocks, fall down”
- Outside play “Alex + run/jump/climb/slide” “Alex under/over/in/out/through”
- Hiding dolls or animals and finding them “hello teddy, goodbye puppy”
- Matching games “Two apples, more dog”



When your child does produce two words together all by themselves expand them to three words to keep them learning.

**More ideas to develop language:**

**Pretend play is great for developing language and social skills.** Two year olds are happy to be alongside you, copying the things they see you do every day. They could “cook” with a wooden spoon and some plastic bowls while you make tea, or “peg” some socks on the edge of the basket as you hang your clothes on the line. They can also pretend to look after teddies or dolls, copying the things you do with them such as feeding and bathing. These activities which children see repeated over and over are great for teaching action words and functions.

**Talk out loud as you do jobs about the house.** Talk about what you are doing and what you are using and your child will learn all kinds of things. “I’m cutting the carrots, chop, chop, chop” “I need something to mix the gravy, what could I use, spoons are good for mixing”

**Sorting and tidying are great ways to practice concepts such as size, shape, colour and position words.** As you sort the washing you could talk about **size**. “here are the big socks and here are the little socks. Daddy’s socks are big and yours are little.” Picking up toys could be a way to develop **colours**, “here is a red block, let’s pick up all the red blocks first.” Putting away the dishes could help develop concepts of **shape**, let’s put the square containers here and the round ones here.” and **position** “let’s put the cups up the top and the pans down the bottom.” Bathing and dressing are great for learning to combine words, “arm in, leg in” “wash your face, wash your tummy”.

While many skills can be taught as you go through the day one thing that is really worth setting aside a few minutes each day for in a busy schedule is to **read to your child**. Those few minutes will pay off in the long term with more success at school and with your child developing a love of reading and learning.

# Answering simple questions for toddlers

*As children grow older, their ability to answer questions develops. Responding to questions helps us to share information, develop relationships, learn from experiences and demonstrate our knowledge.*

Blank, Rose and Berlin were researchers that looked at the types of questions teachers asked year one children in the classroom and then classified them into 4 different levels from concrete to abstract. Level one questions are about concrete items and are the first types of questions children learn to answer. Level 4 questions are the most abstract on this scale and are typically consolidated after a child starts school. By understanding the different levels of questions we can:

- Simplify questions when needed to help our child understand
- Expose the child to more complex questions to stimulate their development
- Help prepare our child to answer the types of questions used in educational settings

**Level one is the simplest of the four levels of questions and begins to develop in toddlers. Most children are able to consistently respond to this level by the age of three years. At this level children respond to their senses and talk about the things they see, hear and touch immediately in front of them as they answer these early questions.**

## Level one questions include:

- Choosing objects “Show me the...”
- Naming objects “What is this?”
- Copying actions “Do this...”
- Naming actions “What is he doing?”
- Naming things seen or heard “What did you see/hear?”
- Matching objects “Find one like this”
- Repeating sentences “Say this”



## To help a very young child learn to answer questions:

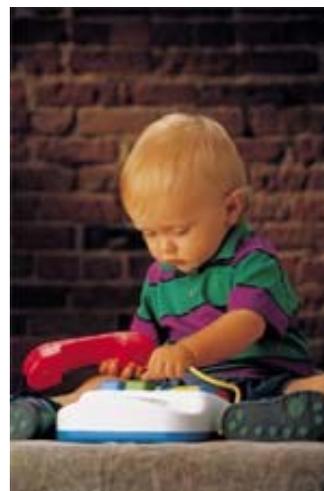
- give lots of practice with one question type before moving on
- keep your questions short, just three or four words to begin
- give only a few choices, two or three pictures or objects to start with, and add more as your child learns

## If your child does not know the answer you can:

- give them a choice “Is it a duck or a bear?”
- guide their hand “Let’s find the duck together”
- model the answer “It’s a duck, you say it... What’s this?... It’s a duck”

## Try these activities to practice level one questions:

**Peekaboo** Have some familiar dolls, animals and teddies and a cloth such as a tea towel or small blanket. Ask your child to close their eyes, hide one toy under the cloth and then ask them to open their eyes and say “Who is it?” Take the cloth off and say “Who is it?” Hide the toy again and ask “Who did you see?” Make a peekaboo picture game by taping some coloured paper flaps onto a piece of cardboard and sliding photos of family members under the flaps for your child to open and name.



# Answering simple questions for toddlers



Try these activities to practice level one questions:

**Surprise box** You can use plastic containers and recycled boxes or buy a few brightly coloured gift boxes to use in this activity. Have a number of small familiar items that will fit in the boxes. To begin with let your child see the items, touch them, talk about them and tell your child their names. Ask your child to close their eyes and hide an object in each box. Help your child to open the box and ask “What’s this?” When your child can do this easily find some new items to hide without showing your child the items first.

**Feely bag** Use a cloth bag such as a library bag or pillow case and choose a number of familiar items to put inside it. Begin by showing your child the items. Talk about them and name them as you put them in the bag. Help your child to put their hand in and find an item. Let them pull it out and ask “What did you find?” When they can name the items easily put some new items in the bag without showing them first and see if your child can name them.

**Books** There are lots of ways to use books to practice these types of questions. Early board books with clear pictures of familiar objects can be used to practice “Show me a ...” Use flap books to practice “Who’s/what’s this?” Open and close the flap then ask “What did you see?” Use animal and vehicle books and make noises for your child and ask them to “Point to what you can hear”. Use picture books of children playing or doing daily activities to practice “What is he/she doing?”

**Card games** Matching games such as lotto games and snap games with pictures of familiar items can be used to practice several different types of questions. If you don’t have these games you can make your own from photos, clip art or junk mail (Remember you need two junk mail catalogues that are the same)

- Place one lotto board or cards on the table. Hold up a matching card and ask your child “Find one like this”.
- Place three or four cards on the table, name and talk about them then turn them face down. Turn one over, count to five then turn it back down. Ask your child “What did you see?” Once your child able to do this repeat it with new pictures without showing them first.
- Use some pictures of things that make a noise, look at them and talk about their names and the sounds they make. Place them face down, pick up one card but don’t show your child the picture. Make the sound, ask “What did you hear?” and see if they can guess which card you have.

**Sound makers** Collect a number of things from around the house that make sounds such as squeaky toys, rattles, small bells, musical or noisy toys, crunchy paper or plastic, shakers made from plastic bottles with different things inside. Look at them, listen to them, talk about them and name them for your child. Ask your child to close their eyes, make a sound then hide the item as in the mystery box, peekaboo or feely bag games above. See if your child can tell “What did you hear?” and then find the item.

**Animal noises** Collect a number of toy animals and talk about them together, name them and talk about the sounds they make. Older children can use picture cards or small plastic zoo or farm animals. Ask your child to close their eyes, hide an animal as in the mystery box, peekaboo or feely bag games above. Make the animal’s noise and see if your child can tell “What did you hear?” then find the animal to see if they were right.

**Photo albums** Use photos of family, friends, familiar items and daily activities in photo albums or slide shows to help your child practice “Who is this?” “What is this?” and “What are they doing?”

**Puppets** Use puppets or large dolls or toy animals to practice “Do this...” and “Say this...” Make the puppet clap hands, wave or blow a kiss and ask your child to copy. Make the puppet say “hello” or simple sentences and ask your child to copy. Gradually make the actions or sentences more difficult.

# Communication tips for three year olds

Three year olds are going through a rapid period of development in their communication skills. They move from combining words together to using “real” sentences. Their speech becomes clearer too, so that unfamiliar people, not just Mum and Dad can understand them.



## Three year olds should be able to understand the following:

- Instructions with a couple of parts, such as “get your shoes and put them by the door”.
- Concepts and describing words such as position words: in, on, off, out, up, down, under, top; size concepts such as: big, little, small, long; number concepts such as: one, two, more; and describing words such as loud, quiet, heavy, soft, hard, fast, slow.
- Function words: “find me something to cut with”, “show me which one can fly”.
- What and where questions such as “What’s this?” and “Where is the duck?”.

Negatives: no, not, don’t.

## Three year olds should be able to do the following:

- Make sentences of up to five words
- Use early grammar words such as: he, she, is, a, the, and word endings: John’s, cats, running.
- Name most common objects and actions.
- Answer yes/no and what/where questions.
- Tell their name, age and if they are a boy or girl.
- Use a range of speech sounds in the beginning, middle and ends of words and speak clearly enough that most of what they say can be understood by an unfamiliar person.



## To develop your three year olds understanding:

- Talk at a level just above the level your child uses themselves. If your child uses sentences of three to five words, make yours just a little longer.
- Introduce new words, repeating the new word or idea a number of times to help your child learn and remember.
- Use the new word in different settings so that your child develops a deeper understanding of the word. For example to teach your child “heavy’ you might talk about the washing basket being heavy, the shopping being heavy, your child being heavy now they are bigger.
- Contrast concepts with their opposite. Empty the washing basket then talk about how it is now light.

# Communication tips for three year olds (cont.)

## To develop your three year olds use of language:

- Repeat back their sentences to them now and then fixing up any mistakes. “I **cutted** it” “Yes, you **cut** it, well done”. This will help them gradually learn adult grammar and pronunciation. Gently emphasise your change but make sure you also sound interested and positive.
- Add extra words and ideas to what your child says; “I found a **sock**” “You found a **big, blue sock**, let’s find another one to match, let’s find another **big, blue sock**”.



Most importantly listen to what your child has to say and make talking together a positive time for both of you.

## Ideas for developing language skills:

**Out and about.** Obstacle courses and treasure hunts are free, lots of fun and can be done inside or out at home, in the backyard or in the playground. They are a great way to develop your child’s ability to listen, follow instructions and learn position words such as in, on, under, around, next to and through. Just hide some things for your child to find or set up a course for them to follow then give simple instructions. Gradually make the instructions longer and more complicated.

**Craft.** Craft activities are great for teaching concepts such as colour, size, shape, texture. Try painting and play dough to develop concepts and try making a collage for listening skills and following instructions.

**Stories.** Stories teach children so much that they should be a part of every child’s daily routine. For three year olds try stories with a simple series of actions to help them learn to link sentences and ideas together. Stories with rhythm and rhyme keep young children involved and lead to the development of early literacy skills. Help your child practice listening and answering what and where questions by finding things in the pictures.

**Pretend play.** Three year olds love to pretend and to copy adults. Pretending allows children to learn and practice new words and communication skills and to use familiar ideas in new ways. A collection of toys for pretending such as tea or cooking sets, farm animals, dolls or teddies, cars or trucks are toys that your child will use over and over. The way your child uses them will change, grow and develop with your child so they are good value for money. You can also use things about the house to play shops, make cubbies, play puppets and play dress-ups for more pretending. Don’t forget to join in your child’s play so you can talk with them about what they are doing.

**Helping around the house.** Three year olds love to help adults and if you can involve them in some of your daily activities you can help them learn action and function words at the same time. Talk about what you do and what they are doing. Get them involved; in sorting washing into big and little, counting and sorting colours as they hand you the pegs, learning new words as you put away the shopping. Get them involved in some gardening and cooking too as they can be fun ways to learn.

# Answering questions for three year olds

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Blank, Rose and Berlin were researchers that looked at the types of questions teachers asked year one children in the classroom and then classified them into 4 different levels from concrete to abstract. Level one questions are about concrete items and are the first types of questions children learn to answer. Level 4 questions are the most abstract on this scale and are typically consolidated after a child starts school. By understanding the different levels of questions we can:

- Simplify questions when needed to help our child understand
- Expose the child to more complex questions to stimulate their development
- Help prepare our child to answer the types of questions used in educational settings

**Level two is the second most simple of the four levels of questions** and typically develops in three year olds. At this level children talk about the things they see, hear and touch but focus in on specific details as they answer these questions, such as functions, differences, actions and characteristics.

## Level two questions include:

- Choosing things by function “Which one can cut?”
- Naming functions “What do we do with this?”
- Describing differences “how are this one and this one different?”
- Selecting people by actions “Show me a boy who is running”
- Doing a series of actions in order “Do this, then do this”
- Finding items with two characteristics “Which one is round and red?”
- Describing actions in a scene “What is happening in the picture?”
- Recalling information heard, such as in a statement or simple story “what.., who...where...?”
- Naming functions and characteristics of objects “what is this part for?”



## To help a child learn to answer questions:

- give lots of practice with one question type before moving on
- keep your questions short, clear and specific
- give only a few choices, two or three pictures or objects to start with, and add more as your child learns

## If your child does not know the answer you can:

- Rephrase your question as a question from a simpler level then try the question again
- Give them a choice “Is it this one or this one?”
- Model the answer then try another similar question.



# Answering questions for three year olds

Try these activities to practice level two questions:

**Functions treasure hunt.** Write a number of function words onto slips of paper or card. You could include: clean, cut, eat, wipe, draw, brush, sweep, watch, cook, drink, and play. Place the cards face down on the table, turn one card over and search the house to see how many things can be used for this function. Repeat with each card and see which card helps you find the most objects.



**Functions Feely bag.** Use a library bag, shopping bag or pillowcase and place a number of different objects inside the bag. Take turns to pull objects out of the bag and say what they are used for. Choose a mixture of simple well-known items and some that your child may be less familiar with to challenge their thinking skills.

**Simon says.** Play the well-known game “Simon says...” but ask your child to do two actions or three in a row. For example you might say “Simon says touch your head then jump up and down” or “Simon says clap your hands, touch your nose and point to your shoes”. See how many actions your child can follow in a row. Ask your child to give you some instructions to follow.

**Picture puzzles** Print of some large pictures of objects from clip art or cut some from magazines or catalogues. Cut each item into a number of pieces. For example you may choose a pair of scissors and cut it into separate parts for the handles, join and blades. Look at each piece and see if your child can tell you what each piece is for, such as the handles are for holding, the blades for cutting and the join so the blades can move. Then see if your child can fit the whole thing together correctly.

**Story questions.** Choose a simple book with one or two sentences per page. Read a page then ask for child a who, what or when question about what you have just read. Continue to read asking one question per page. Initially help your child use the pictures for clues, then move to just listening to the words and answering before you look at the pictures. Gradually move to more complex stories.

**Washing sort differences** As you sort the washing, ask your child to find pairs of the same items and talk about how they are different. For example an adult and child’s sock are different because one is big and one is small, a winter and summer top might be different by the length of the sleeves etc. You can repeat this activity as you unpack the dishwasher, or put away the shopping.



**Characteristics collage.** For this activity you need some sheets of coloured paper, glue and scissors. Place three or four sheets of paper on top of each other and cut some shapes in different sizes, so that you have each shape in each of the colours. Spread your coloured shapes on the table and ask your child “Find one that is red and round, find one that is blue and big...” As your child finds each shape they can glue them onto the sheet to make a picture. You can also do this activity using coloured blocks of different shapes, or Lego or Duplo.

# Communication tips for four year olds

Many four year olds are confident communicators who speak clearly and fluently in long and complex sentences. If you are concerned that your child does not speak as well as they should or just want to help them get ready for success at school here are some ideas to help your child develop strong communication skills:

Four year olds should be able to:

- understand and use a wide variety of words
- construct sentences with joining words: and, then, so, but, because
- use most grammar correctly
- be able to hold a conversation
- be able to join in groups and play cooperatively with other children
- be able to describe something they have done in another time or place
- be able to retell a familiar story from a book
- be able to tell how to do something familiar with a number of steps
- follow instructions with a number of steps
- ask and answer who, why and how questions
- pronounce most words correctly



**To develop your four year old's understanding** try to talk at a level just above the level your child uses themselves. If your child uses sentences of five words, make yours just a little longer. Introduce new words and concepts as you talk with your child. Repeat the new word or idea a number of times to help your child learn and remember. Use the new word in different settings so that your child develops a deeper understanding of the word.

**To develop your four year olds use of language** repeat back their sentences to them now and then fixing up any mistakes. "I've got cold **foots**" "Cold **feet**, oh no let get some warm socks". This will help them gradually learn adult grammar and pronunciation. Gently emphasize your change but make sure you also sound interested and positive. Also add extra words and ideas to what your child says; "I found a **sock**" "You found a **long, stripped sock**, let's find another one to match, let's find another **long, stripped sock**". Most importantly listen to what your child has to say and make talking together a positive time for both of you.



# Communication tips for four year olds (cont.)

## Ideas for developing language skills

**Play word games** such as: “I went to the shop and I bought .....” Each person must repeat what has previously been bought before adding their own to the list. If your child finds it difficult to remember what is said cut pictures from junk mail to make cards and turn over the cards in turn and name them as you play. Try variations such as I went to the zoo, jungle, park, beach etc.

**Go for a walk and talk about the things you see.** Collect things to bring home and keep such as: feathers, stones, leaves. Look at them closely maybe with a magnifying glass and talk about the colour, shape, texture, size and weight of each thing.

**Play hide and seek with toy animals or dolls.** Once they are found talk about who was found where i.e.: “The horse was under the big, blue chair”. Use lots of describing and position words.

**Make some sequence cards.** Use a digital camera to take a series of photos of your child doing familiar activities such as brushing their teeth or making toast. Print them out, cut them up and see if your child can put them in order and tell you what they are doing. Once familiar activities are easy for your child use more complex activities and take more pictures, such as craft and cooking activities.

**Make your own books.** Take your camera along on an outing and take a series of photos through the day. When you come home print them out and slip into a mini photo album. With your child write a sentence or two for each picture. Use a story beginning structure of “when, who and where” e.g. “One day Max went to the beach” and an ending structure with a feeling word or two “at night-time Max went home feeling happy and tired”. Write your story in past tense and use some feeling words, describing words and direct speech “Max said “Wow”. These will help your child understand how stories are structured, an important pre-literacy skill.

For more ideas on developing children’s language skills visit the “extras” section of the Talking Matters website <http://extras.talkingmatters.com.au/>.



# Answering questions for four year olds

As children grow older, their ability to answer questions develops. Responding to questions helps us to share information, develop relationships, learn from experiences and demonstrate our knowledge.

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- Help prepare our child to answer the types of questions used in educational settings

**Level three is a more complex level of questions and typically develops in pre-schoolers.** At this level children talk about things which are more removed from what is directly in front of them. They need to reorganise information and draw on their experiences, to generalise, predict and to talk about the actions of others.

## Level three questions include:

- a. Predicting “What will happen next?”
- b. Taking on the role of another “How would he fix it?”
- c. Following a set of directions “Get the cup and bring it to mummy”
- d. Retell a routine sequence “Tell me how to make a sandwich”
- e. Identifying similarities “How are these the same?”
- f. Understanding negatives “Find one that is not red”
- g. Defining words “What is a...”



## To help a child learn to answer questions:

- give lots of practice with one question type before moving on
- keep your questions short, clear and specific
- give only a few choices, two or three pictures or objects to start with, and add more as your child learns

## If your child does not know the answer you can:

- Rephrase your question as a question from a simpler level then try the question again
- Give them a choice “Is it this one or this one?”
- Model the answer then try another similar question.



# Answering questions for four year olds

Try these activities to practice level three questions:

**Story book predicting.** Choose a book with a series of actions. Start with a book your child is familiar with and one where they know the story quite well. Read a page or two then stop and ask your child “What will happen next?” Continue to read asking this question now and then. When your child can do this with familiar stories try a new story and help them use cues from the story, the pictures and their own experiences to make predictions.



**Story book role taking.** Choose a story book with a problem to solve. Pamela Allen’s picture books are particularly good for this and commonly available, but many picture books have a problem based story line. Read the story and talk about the pictures together. As problems occur ask your child “What can he/she do?” Talk about the different options and why they may or may not work then turn the page and see what happens.

**Real life role taking.** As you do daily activities talk to your child about your actions and ask them to predict what you may do next. “Look my hair is a mess, what can I do?” “I can’t find my car keys, what can I do?” “Your sister spilt her drink, what will she do next?”

**Sequences.** As you do daily activities talk about the steps involved. “Let’s put the toothpaste on the brush, brush your teeth and then you can rinse”. Ask your child to tell you what steps they need to do and in what order. Use a digital camera to take a series of photos, print and cut these out for your child to practice putting in order and retelling. These could include cooking and craft activities, daily activities and outings.

**Obstacle course directions.** Use a playground or set up some items in your backyard such as chairs, washing baskets, ropes laid out on the ground that your child can move around, on and over. You could also use items inside to allow your child to practice following instructions. Give your child a series of two or three instructions to follow e.g. “go around the chair, then under the table”. Gradually make your instructions more complex.

**Shopping unpack directions.** As you unpack the shopping give your child some instructions to follow “put the milk in the fridge and the apples in the bowl”. Once they are listening and following directions well give them some silly instructions “put the milk in the sink and the apples under the table”. This will check that they are really listening.

**Negatives sorting.** Get a box of Lego, blocks or beads and tip them on the floor or table. Ask your child “find me all the ones that are not red”. Repeat for some other colours then try sorting by shape or size, find all the ones that are not big, find all the ones that are not round. You could also try this while sorting washing “find all the things that don’t go on your legs” or putting away shopping “find all the things that are not for eating”.

**Similarities match.** Use a collection of picture cards of various different objects from a card game or make your own from clip art. Place all the pictures face up on the table and take turns to find two things that are similar and explain why they are the same. They might be in the same category “they are both fruit”, have the same function “both are for eating” or the same location “both are in the bathroom”. Keep matching until no more matches can be made. For extra fast thinking use the cards to play snap and make a match when you can explain something the same about two items

# Communication tips for five year olds

Five year olds usually show well developed communication skills. They should be able to hold a conversation confidently with adults and other children. They are getting ready for the next stage of language, literacy!

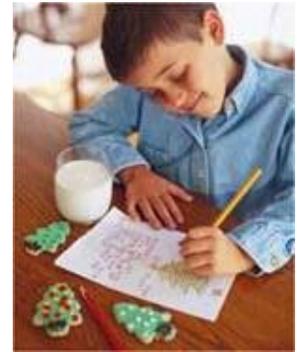
## Five year olds should be able to:

- Tell you what things are for: “you cut things with scissors”
- Use sentences of five to seven words or more
- Understand concepts and opposites such as: wet/dry, hard/soft , same/different, before/after and position words such as: on top, behind, through; understand same/different, count ten things and name colours
- Listen to and understand stories and retell them from the pictures
- Use past, present and future tense and grammar words such as “he” and “she”
- Ask and answer “why” and “how” questions
- Describe their feelings with words such as: happy, sad, mad



**Five year olds are beginning school.** This means they should be ready for more formal teaching of literacy. Some of the skills needed for learning literacy include:

- Being able to hear beginning sounds in words
- Being able to match and make rhyming words
- Being able to clap or count the syllable beats in words
- Recognising letters and the sounds they make
- Being able to write their own name
- Understanding the structure of a story with a beginning, middle and end



**To develop your five year old's understanding** try to talk at a level just above the level your child uses themselves. If your child uses sentences of five words, make yours just a little longer. Introduce new words and concepts as you talk with your child. Repeat the new word or idea a number of times to help your child learn and remember. Use the new word in different settings so that your child develops a deeper understanding of the word.

**To develop your five year old's use of language** repeat back their sentences to them now and then fixing up any mistakes. “I’ve got cold **foots**” “Cold **feet**, oh no let get some warm socks”. This will help them gradually learn adult grammar and pronunciation. Gently emphasize your change but make sure you also sound interested and positive. Also add extra words and ideas to what your child says; “I found a **bug**” “You found a **tiny, green bug**, let’s look for another one, let’s find another **tiny, green, bug**”. Most importantly listen to what your child has to say and make talking together a positive time for both of you.

# Communication tips for five year olds (cont.)

## Help your five year old develop language skills by:

**Immersing your child in language.** Talk together as often as you can. Talk about what your child has done in the day and what you have done. Talk about what they play, draw and watch on TV. Talk together as you do household tasks, encouraging your child to be involved as you cook, clean, shop and garden.

**Encouraging your child to share their experiences using language.** Encourage your child to share what they have seen, done and made with others. Call Grandma and tell her what you did at school. Show dad what you drew and tell him all about it. Talking with others about something that happened in another time and place helps develop "decontextualised language", the ability to talk about something that happened in another context. This is an important pre literacy skill. Give your children something concrete to talk about to start with. Help them show something they drew or made and talk about it or use photos or video clips of things you have done to share with family and friends.

## Helping your child learn to link sentences into "texts".

A text is something more than a sentence. A text can be:

- a "procedure", how to do something such as how to make toast
- a recount, telling about something you have done
- a narrative or story
- a description
- a discussion, explanation or argument



Children who can link sentences together when they are talking do better when they have to write texts. You can practice making texts when talking about daily activities such as:

- telling how you did something such as a craft or cooking activity
- recounting an event or outing
- retelling a story from the pictures in a book
- describing an object to someone
- explaining why you did something or why you should do something

## Linking your child's spoken language to written language by:

- practising writing your child's name together and write it on things that belong to them
- looking at the words on signs, labels, advertising, magazines and books and talking about them together
- providing a variety of reading and writing materials for your child to use such as paper, note pads, pencils, books, magazines, letter puzzles and games
- making your own books using photos of your child's experiences and writing the words together.
- reading lots of stories and talking about the story but also about the words and the way the book is written, such as a title at the front, words telling about the pictures, the name of the author, the way the story has a beginning, middle and end.



Check the Talking Matters website for more ideas on language and literacy.

# Language activities



# Top 10 tips for talking with babies and toddlers

Babies are born pre-programmed to tune into the speech around them and to their parents voices specifically, so it is never too soon to start talking with your baby. Simple things you as a parent can do every day can make a real difference to your child's language skills and set them up for future learning success.

- 1. Talk together every day.** Talk to your child whenever you can, as you go about daily activities like cooking, bathing, dressing, feeding, nappy changes, getting ready for bed. Looking after babies and toddlers takes up a lot of time but this time can be used for learning and building relationships as you get the practical things done. It won't take any extra time and if your child is interested and engaged in what you do they will probably cooperate better too.

Make a special talking time each day where you just focus on talking with your child for a few uninterrupted minutes. Talk as you play, sing, say rhymes or look at a book.



- 2. Get down to your child's level and face to face.** Ensure your child can see your face when you are talking to them. This helps them focus, lets them see and hear your words better and encourages them to copy you. This might mean getting down on the floor, putting your child in your lap, cuddling up together on a couch or bed or sitting them up in a high chair at the table with you.

- 3. Follow your child's lead when you talk.** Take some time to see what holds your child's interests. Watch what they look at, touch, hear and reach for and talk with them about these things. Put out a range of toys or books and see which ones they choose. Watch what they do and copy them and talk about what they are doing.

- 4. Use simple clear speech when talking with your child.** There is no need to use "baby talk". It is better for your child to hear real words spoken correctly, but do keep your words simple and your sentences short in the beginning. Gradually make them longer as your child develops. Speaking sentences just one or two words longer than what your child can say is usually about right. This means mostly single words and short phrases for babies. If your child makes up their own words for things or says them in an unusual way, repeat the right word back to them now and then, so they hear the word the correct way and they will use it correctly when they are ready. Don't repeat your child's errors. When your child can talk, repeat and expand what they say to keep them developing their language skills.

- 5. Use lots of repetition.** Young children learn through repetition. Repeat words, rhymes, actions, stories, games and songs. Play games where you can repeat a word or action over and over such as peek-a-boo, or stacking blocks "up, up, up, down".



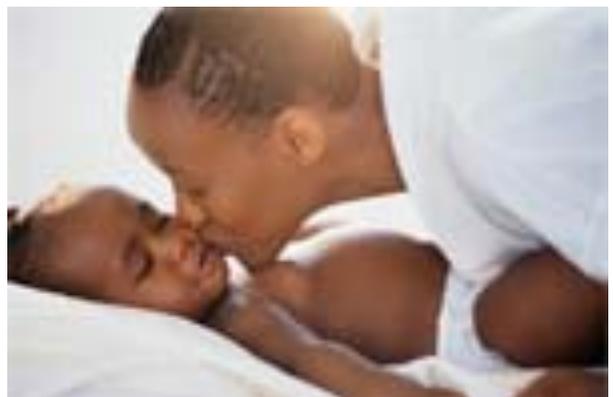
## Top 10 tips for talking with babies and toddlers (cont.)

6. **Encourage imitation.** Babies and toddlers learn so much by copying. Copy your baby's sounds and actions and soon they will begin to copy you. Be surprised and delighted when they copy you and they will want to do it again and again. Repeat something they know a few times then try something new and see if they can copy that too.
7. **Offer choices as often as you can.** As adults we often make small decisions for children that they could make themselves which would allow them to learn and develop communication skills. Often these small things don't really matter, it just takes a little more time for your child to decide, but this is worth it to develop their skills. Only offer choices you are happy for your child to make though. Before your baby can talk they can make choices by pointing, reaching or even just looking at the one they want. Hold up two items, maybe a choice of two foods or two different toys to start with and see which one they show you they want. Tell them the name of the thing they choose and give it to them. They will learn the power of communicating successfully with others and be on their way to developing vital skills.
8. **Encourage turn taking.** Try to structure your play activities so you and your child take turns and are equally active. Once you have taken your turn, pause and wait with anticipation for your child to take another turn.

Show them using body language, that you expect a response. Silently count to five before saying or doing anything. You can also practice turn taking with simple, fun games such as peek-a-boo, rolling a ball back and forth, taking turns to blowing bubbles or stack blocks.

9. **Introduce books as soon as possible.** Reading to your child is one of the best things you can do to help them learn. Make it a part of your day every day. Read new books but also repeat favourite ones over and over. Babies love simple books with bright colours, pictures of familiar things and friendly faces, textures to touch and surprise flaps to explore.
10. **Offer quality learning opportunities as much as possible.** Remember that you are your child's favourite and most educational plaything. A small amount of TV or DVD's are fine but not more than 2 hours per day is recommended for young children. Think about the quality of the programs and whether they are suitable for your child's age. Also think about the toys you give your child to play with. They should be safe, bright, colourful and age appropriate. Some inexpensive toys can be used in many ways, develop many skills and grow with your child; such as blocks, cars and trucks, dolls and animals, pretend toys such as tea sets. Sometimes expensive electronic items can only be used in a limited way and so children may tire of them quickly. Your child may have more fun and learn more doing something simple with you, such as playing with the pegs while you hang the washing than playing alone with an expensive gadget.

Raising babies and toddlers is hard work but it is a special time that passes quickly so remember to take the time to enjoy your child as they grow and develop.



# Play to develop communication and thinking

Play is a powerful tool in developing children's skills in communicating, learning and relating to others. It is something that can be used effectively by both therapists and parents and has the added advantages of being fun and helping parent and child to bond. Stanley Greenspan in his book "The Learning Tree" writes "Playtime is an opportunity for children and parents to connect, share and bond." He writes about play's ability to develop thinking and learning skills "All children gain from this extra boost, but children with learning difficulties- gain-and need it the most".

Greenspan calls his method of play "Floor time". He describes three essential elements of making play a valuable learning experience:

1. Follow your child's lead.
2. Challenge your child to be creative and spontaneous.
3. Expand the action and interaction to include all your child's senses, motor skills as well as some emotions.



**Following your child's lead** can be difficult in the beginning. As adults we often feel our role is to lead and direct our children. If we are able to let our child lead our children are more involved, motivated, engaged and attentive to the activity and so stay more focused and learn more.

Try putting out a range of play things and sit back and watch what your child chooses. Then watch what they do with it. They may not use it the way that is expected. They may get a toy saucepan and put it on their head as a hat or they may want to play with the box rather than the toy inside. Sit and observe for a few minutes what your child does when they are in the lead. Once you can see what your child wants to do with their play, join in gently. Greenspan describes the adult's role as "merely a fun-and non-intrusive-supporting actor". Move alongside your child and do what they are doing. Talk about what you see them do.

**Challenge your child to be spontaneous and creative.** Greenspan states that gentle challenges as a part of interaction help children move to higher levels of thinking. You might ask a question about what your child could do. You might pretend that you cannot get your toy to work. If your child has problems with something don't fix it for them immediately. Challenge them to work it out for themselves. Offer them choices. Ask them why they made the choice they did. If the saucepan is too small for your head, what could you use as a hat? Why did a bowl work, why did the plate not work?"



## Play to develop communication and thinking (cont.)

**Expand the interaction.** Build on your child's play. Bring a doll or teddy into the game and ask your child if teddy can dress up too. What things can you do wearing your saucepan hat? Can you go out in the rain? Can you ride a motorbike? Can you be a soldier? Act these ideas out with your child. Let your hat fall off. How do you feel? Are you sad or frustrated that your hat won't stay on? Help your child explore feelings through their play.

**Here are some more ideas to make play a fun learning time for your child:**

- 1. Choose quality toys.** Choose toys that are strong and safe and therefore give value for money. Choose ones that can be used in a range of different ways and therefore can grow with your child as they develop. Sometimes simple toys are the most flexible, while expensive electronic toys can only be used for one purpose.
- 2. Choose toys appropriate for your child's level.** While you want your child to be challenged, a toy that is too hard for your child to use is frustrating. Choose toys that suit your child's developmental level and motor skills. Bigger items are usually easier for little hands to use.
- 3. Choose toys that can be used for pretend play.** Pretend play is great for developing language, thinking and social skills. Try dolls or animals, cooking toys and tea sets, farm sets and cars, trucks and building items.
- 4. Play with your child.** Try to set aside some time each day to play together. It's great for developing relationships, learning, language and social skills. A child can learn how to share and take turns with an adult and can then play better with other children.
- 5. Offer a range of toys.** Follow your child's interests but don't be too restricted by them. Try expanding into related areas. If your child likes cars, try trucks, trains and other transport. Try a toy library or swap with friends to offer a range of toys and check out second hand shops for pre loved bargains.
- 6. Play is not just about toys.** Play can include real items such as dress ups and things from the kitchen as well as outdoor activities, sand, water and even mud. It can also include craft activities and just using imagination.



# Developing vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words a person understands and uses. The more words a child can understand and use the better they can learn in a range of settings. Vocabulary is one part of language that continues to develop all through life. It is related to the topic or task at hand. Try talking to an eight year old about dinosaurs or a twelve year old about computers and you will probably learn a few new words. Young children's vocabulary starts with names of people and things, but grows to include action words and describing words.

Activities to develop vocabulary in young children include:

**Naming.** Use clear picture cards, without written words to play naming games. Choose pictures in categories that are relevant to the child's experience or topics they are interested in.



**Lotto.** Make two copies of a picture sheet (eg. general food) and use these as the lotto boards for each player. Make another 2 copies and cut these into individual cards. Shuffle the cards and place them face down on the table. Each player then takes it in turn to choose a card, say the word and match it to their board. The first player to fill their board is the winner.

**Snap.** Use the picture pairs from above to play Snap. Divide the cards evenly among the players. Each player turns over one card at a time and says the word. If 2 pictures in a row match then the players must say Snap. Whoever is first gets to keep the cards.

**Board games.** Use the picture cards with any board game. After rolling the dice and moving their token, the player picks up a card and says the name of the object.

**Memory.** Spread out each of the picture pairs on the table upside down. Players take it in turn to choose two cards. If they match the player can keep them. If not, put them back and the next player has a turn.

**Picture books.** Picture books and children's encyclopaedias, with pictures in categories are ways of introducing new words into you child's vocabulary. Choose pages where your child can name most of the pictures and there are just a few new words.

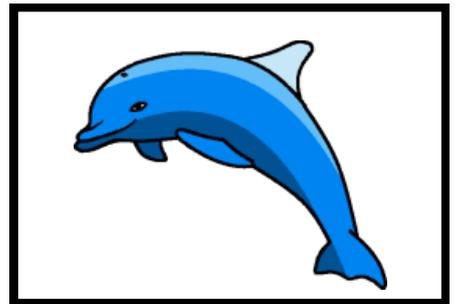
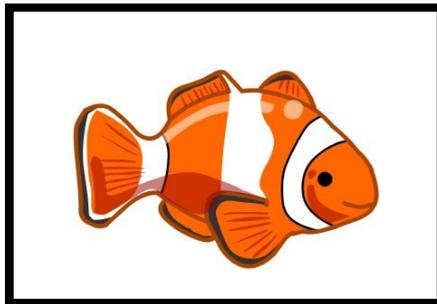
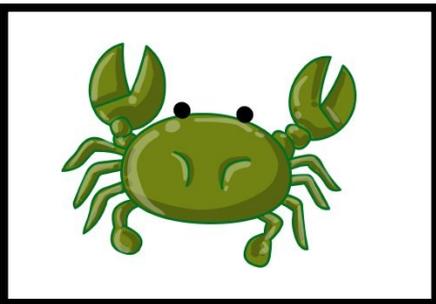
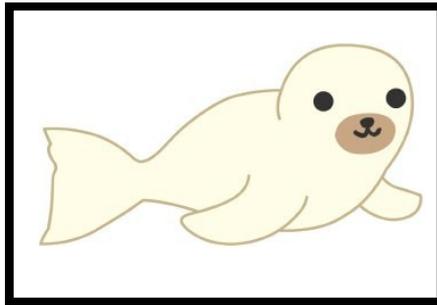
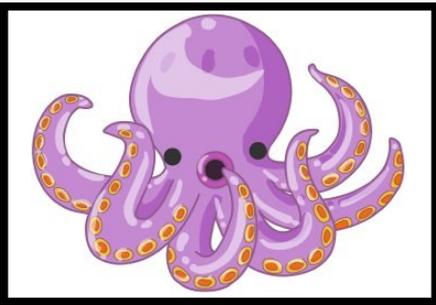
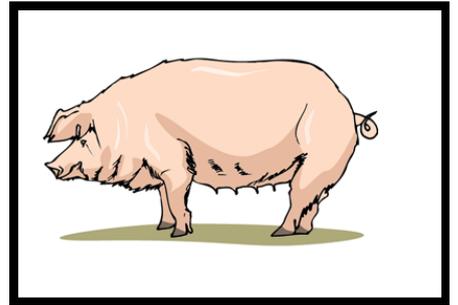
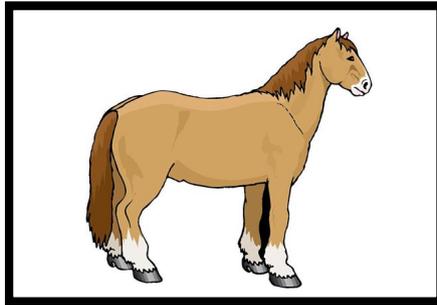
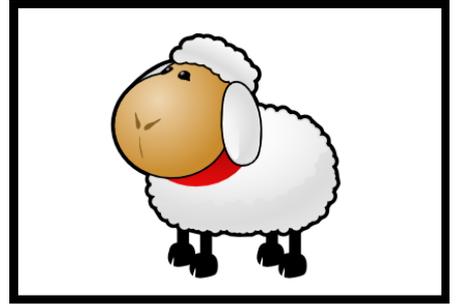
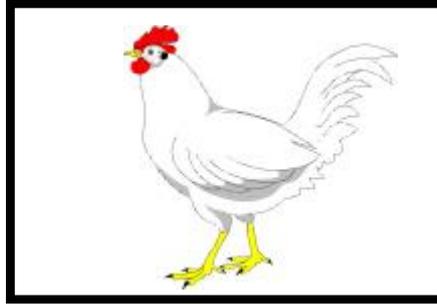
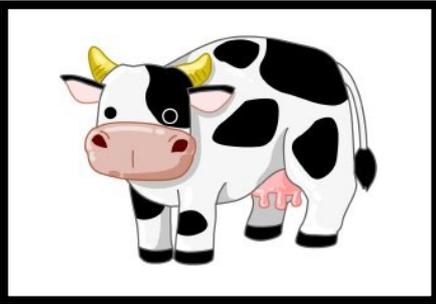
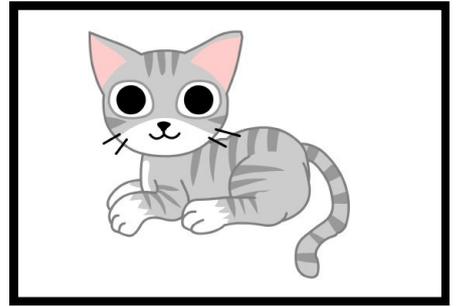
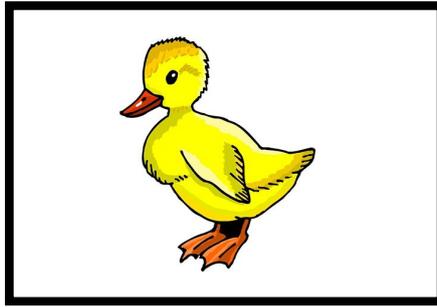
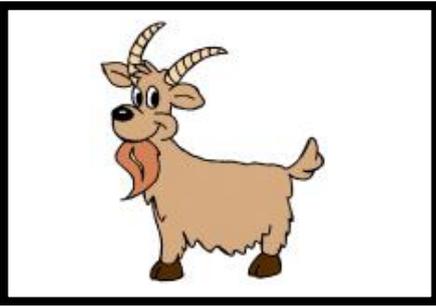
## Try incorporating naming into everyday activities.

For example after shopping ask "What did you see at the Butchers, Deli, etc".

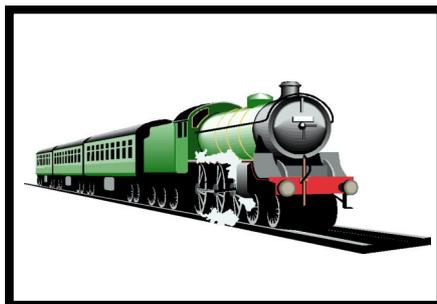
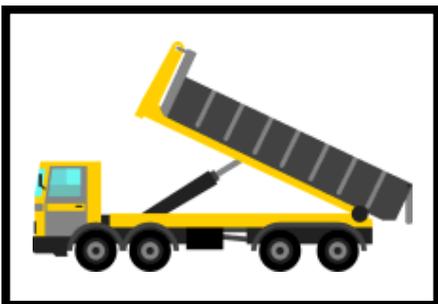
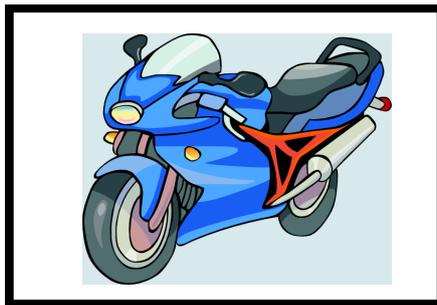
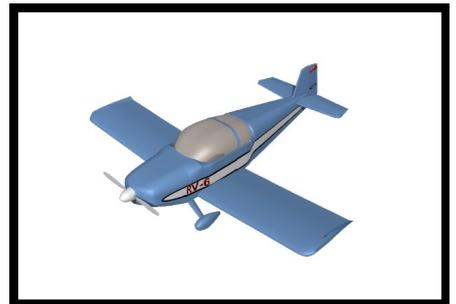
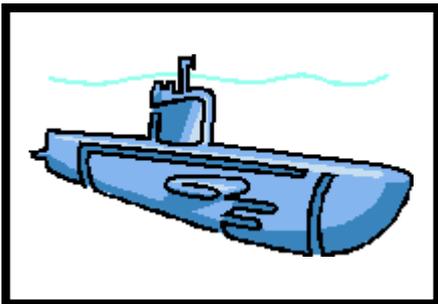
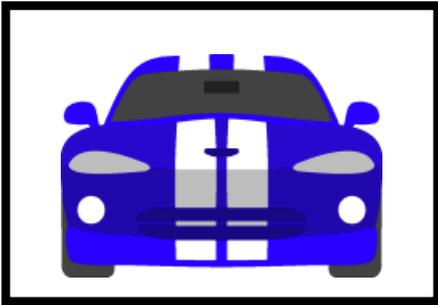
**Referencing** involves using specific vocabulary so that it is clear to the listener what you are talking about. Children with limited vocabulary often have difficulty with referencing. This means that they use "vague" words such as "it, he/she, thing, stuff" that make it hard to follow who or what they are talking about.



# Vocabulary lotto



# Vocabulary lotto



## Developing action, or doing words

Children usually begin to speak by learning lots of names of objects and people as well as some functional words such as “up, more, gone”. In order to move from single words and phrases on to true sentences children need to learn to use verbs or action words. These combine with names of items and people to form sentences.

There are different types of action words. Children begin by learning concrete actions that they do and see in their daily lives such as: run, jump, sleep, eat, and draw. Some verbs are less concrete such as: see, go, hear, like, say and look. Cognitive verbs talk about what happens in your head such as: think, decide, wonder, want and guess. Words such as “is, be and are” are verbs too.

Here are some activities to practice at home to develop the use of action words.

1. In everyday activities eg: dressing, bathing, eating, shopping, housework, talk to your child about what you and your child are doing, “look mum is **cutting** the carrots and **peeling** the potatoes”.
2. Look at pictures in books and talk about what people are doing. Books with simple pictures such as “Spot” or ones with photos of children playing are good.
3. In favourite games and daily activities, model action words.  
**Craft:** draw, colour, cut, glue, sprinkle, spread, stir, stick, peel.  
**Playdough:** roll, squeeze, poke, push, kneed, cut, stretch.  
**Cooking:** mix, cut, stir, spread, taste, smell, lick, bite, chew.  
**Bath time:** wash, splash, scrub, pour, drip.  
**Outdoors:** run, climb, hide, swing, dig, ride, hop, jump, skip.
4. Use dolls, plastic animals, teddies or figurines to act out actions as you model the words, “look teddy is dancing, puppy is hiding”.



# Learning to use action sentences

Children usually begin to speak by learning lots of names of objects and people as well as some functional words such as “up, more, gone”. Next children need to learn to use verbs or action words. These combine with names of items and people to form sentences.

Sentences begin either:

“action” + “object/person” such as “eat the apple” or “hug mummy”  
or “object/person + action” such as “rabbit eats” or “Ben hugs”.

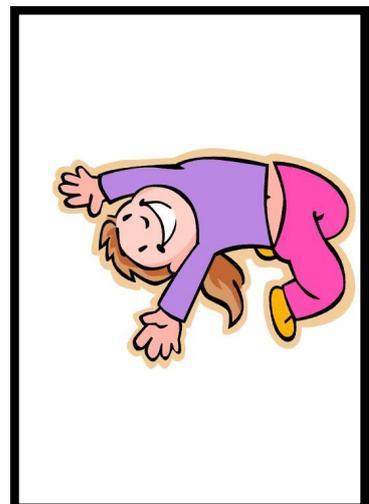
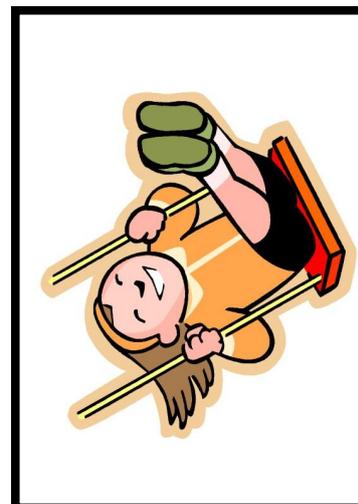
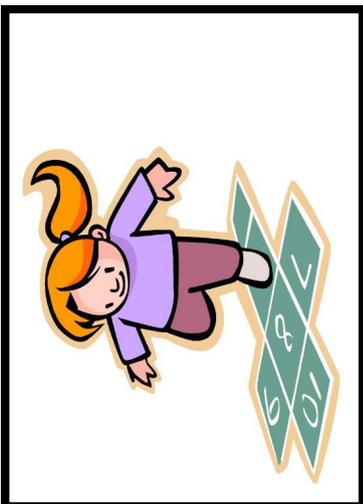
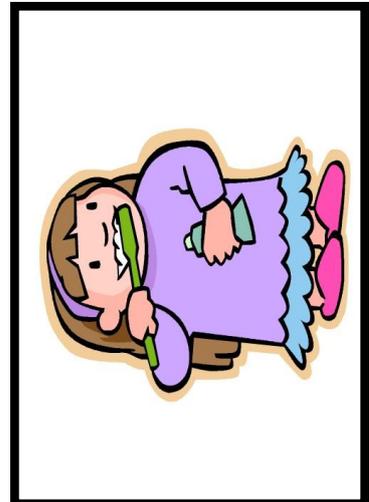
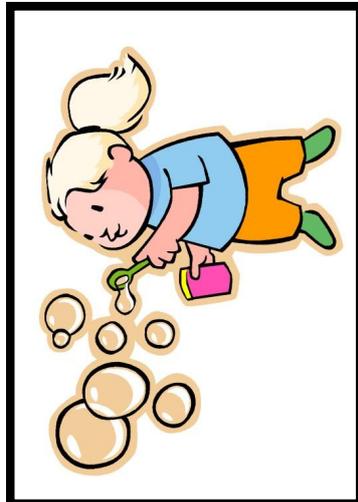
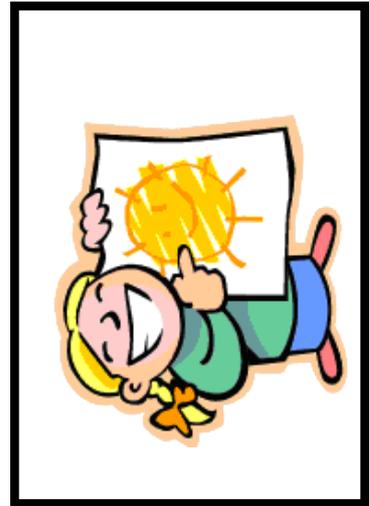
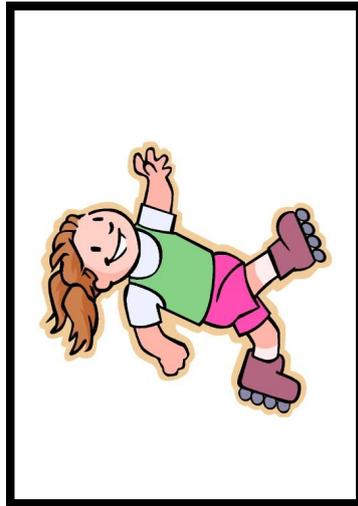
Children then begin to combine these into the form “person/object + action + object” such as “rabbit eats the apple” or “Ben hugs mummy”.

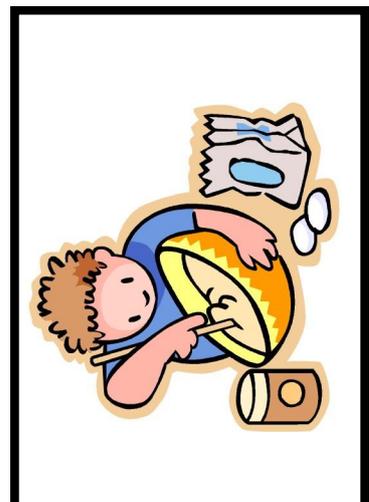
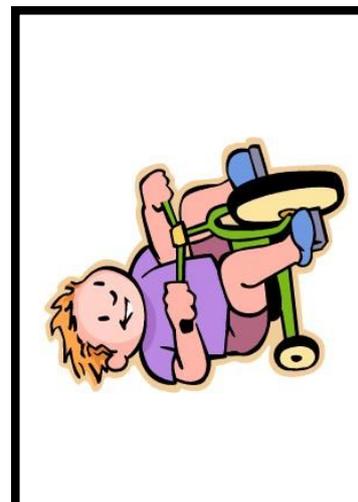
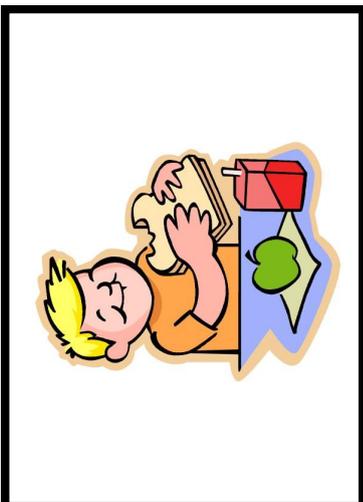
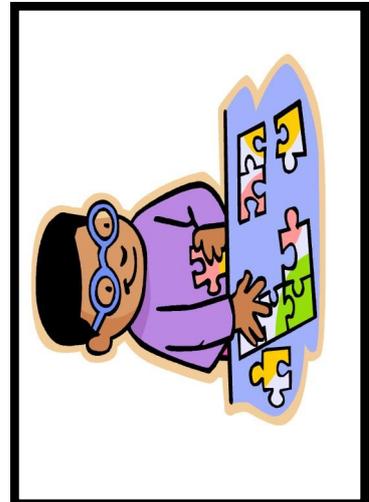
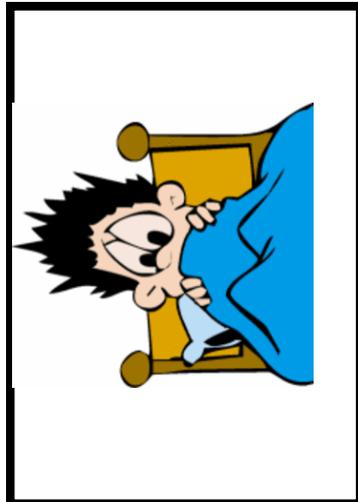
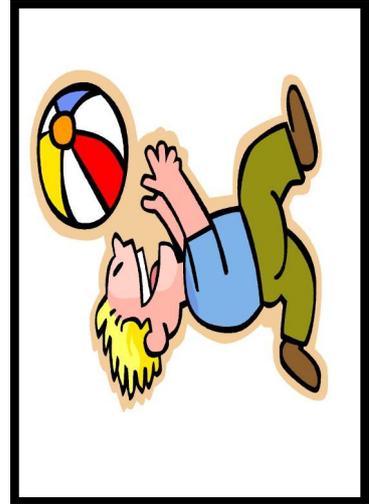
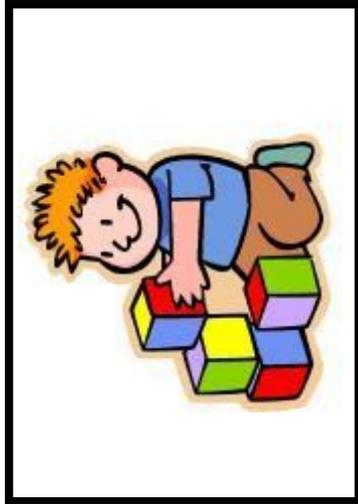
Finally children add descriptive words about how the action is done such as “the big rabbit eats the apple quickly” or “Ben hugs mummy everyday”.

Here are some activities to practice at home to develop the use of action sentences.

1. In everyday activities eg: dressing, bathing, eating, shopping, housework talk to your child about what you and your child are doing, “look mum is cutting the carrots and peeling the potatoes”.
2. Look at pictures in books and talk about what people are doing. Books with simple pictures such as “Spot” or ones with photos of children playing are good.
3. In favourite games and daily activities model action words in sentences.  
**Craft:** draw, colour, cut, glue, sprinkle, spread, stir, stick, peel.  
**Playdough:** roll, squeeze, poke, push, kneed, cut, stretch.  
**Cooking:** mix, cut, stir, spread, taste, smell, lick, bite, chew.  
**Bath time:** wash, splash, scrub, pour, drip.
4. Use dolls, plastic animals, teddies, or figurines to act out actions as you model the words, “look teddy is dancing, puppy is hiding”.







# Developing the ability to understand instructions

When children are in the early stages of their language development, we measure their progress by thinking about the number of information carrying words they are able to understand in an instruction. As their language develops children are able to understand more information in an instruction or sentence. Young children may only be able to follow one or two key words. When adults use more information carrying words than the child can understand they usually get confused and don't understand.

The number of information carrying words is different to the number of words in a sentence. The information carrying words are the ones that the child needs to understand in order to follow the instruction. Let's consider the following sentence.

“The dog is chasing the cat.”

The sentence has six words, but it has three information carrying words which carry the meaning of the sentence.

“The dog is chase(ing) the cat.”

Young children often use words in chunks or phrases so their idea of a number of words is different to that of an adult. Words such as sit down, see you later, thank you, what's that, my turn, are considered two or three words by adults, but have a single meaning to young children, who always use the words together as a single unit, and not separately.



A child who is speaking at the two information carrying words level may use the following types of sentences:

“Sit down doggy”, “My turn push”, “Bye bye mummy”

When listening to information carrying words, the context and predictability also makes a difference. For example, if a child is standing in the kitchen and you hand him an empty juice container and say “Put your juice bottle in the bin.” In this situation, the child only needs to understand the one information carrying word, “bin” to follow the instruction.

In a similar situation child is standing in the kitchen and on the table there is a milk bottle, a juice bottle and a cup of juice. You say to the child “Put your juice bottle next to the bin.” In this example, the child needs to understand four information carrying words to get the instruction correct.

When considering a child's ability to follow instructions adults should also think about the context of routine and gesture. If your child always puts their cup on the sink after a meal they may be following their routine rather than truly understanding your instruction. If you point to what you want your child to pick up they may be following your gesture rather than your language. It is a good idea to use routine and gesture to support children while they learn language.



# Developing the ability to understand instructions (cont)

## Using the information carrying words games

- These games consist of some background pictures, and some small pictures which are placed onto the background pictures.
- Cut out the small pictures.
- Place the background pictures in front of the child and check that they know the names of each of the pictures.
- Next place the small pictures in front of the child and check that they know the names of each of these items.
- Tell your child that you are going to play a listening game and that they need to listen carefully and do what you say.
- Give your child an instruction at the appropriate level for them to begin, emphasising the information carrying words.
- Praise them if they place the item correctly.
- If they are not able to follow the instruction give them a clue by handing them the small picture needed or by pointing to the large picture where they need to place the item. If they then do this correctly model the instruction again “well done, you put the pig in the truck.”
- If your child gets all the pictures placed correctly the instructions are simple for them and they need to move to a higher level. If your child is making many mistakes the instructions are too difficult and you need to move to a lower level. A good working level is where your child is getting three or four out of each five instructions correct.



Once your child is skilled at following instructions at a particular level, **you can then encourage them to give the instructions to you**. Some children need to work at a lower level when they are giving the instructions than when they are listening. You may need to cue your child initially by asking, “Which one should I do?” and then, “Where should I put it?”. Once they tell you what to do model their instruction in a full sentence “I’ll put the sheep in the shed”.

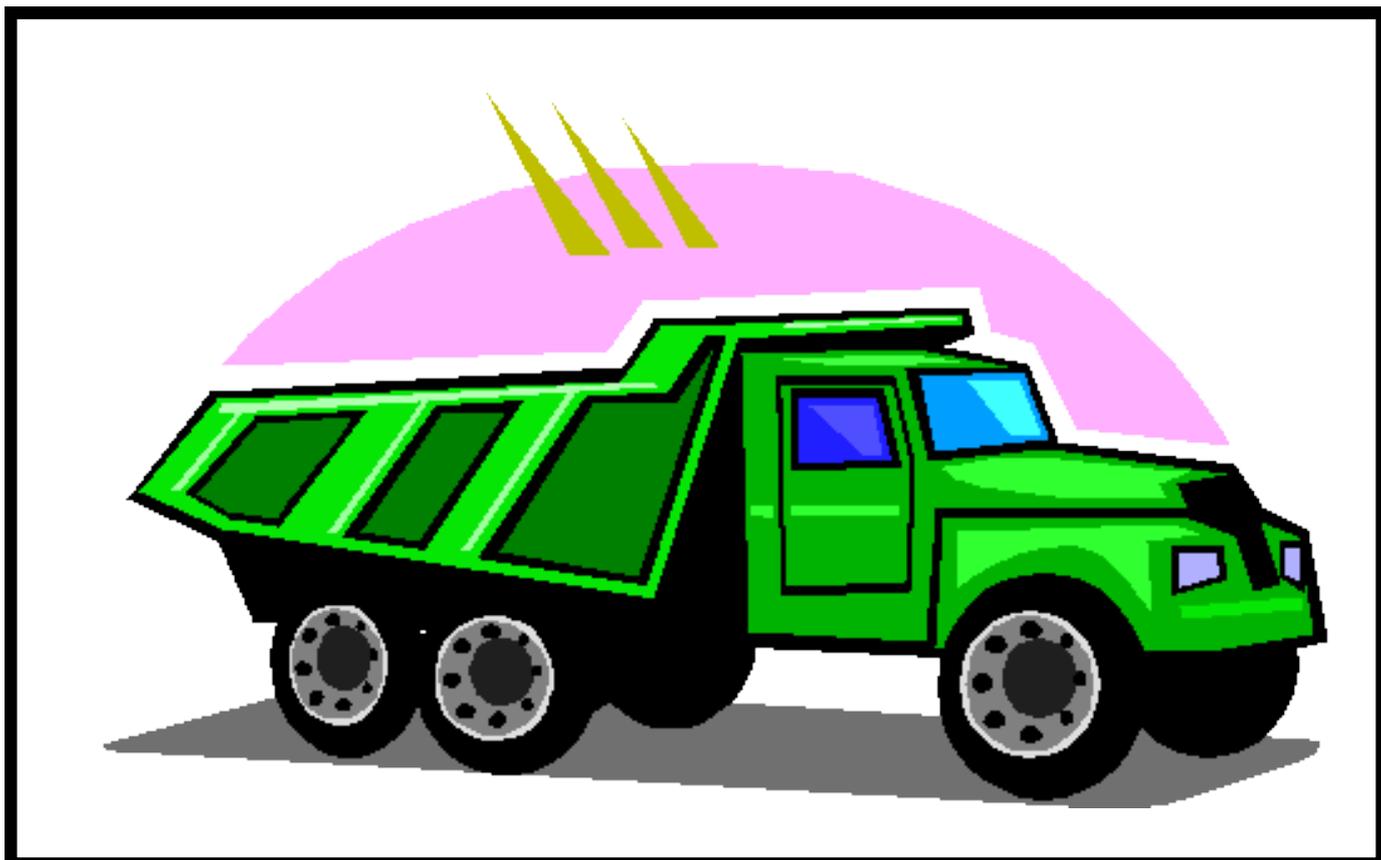
There are more ‘Information Carrying Word’ instructions on the ‘Extras’ section of the Talking Matters website that are free to download. Go to [www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au) and sign up for ‘Extras’.

We have included one game here to get you started. Use the animals from the ‘vocabulary’ section to place on the boat or truck for a 2 information carrying word activity. To make it 3 information carrying words the child can follow instructions with the concepts ‘big’ and ‘little’ as well. It is important however that children are competent in knowing these concepts, and the vocabulary before you can expect them to follow instructions including those aspects.

# Information Carrying Word game



# Information Carrying Word game



# Learning concepts

Concept words are important to understand so that instructions can be followed accurately and information can be passed on clearly and specifically

Concepts and the ages they typically develop are:

## **Position concepts**

2 to 3 years: on, off, in, out, up, down, under, top, open, shut

3 to 4 years: bottom, behind, first, near

4 1/2 years: middle, around, away from, between, through, next to, beside, last

4 1/2 to 5 years: in front, in a line, corner

## **Size concepts**

2 to 3 years: big, small/little, long

3 to 4 years: short (length and height)

4 1/2 years: tall, fat

4 1/2 to 5 years: thin

## **Quantity**

2 to 3 years: one, two

3 to 4 years: three, every, none

4 1/2 years: four, most, few

4 1/2 to 5 years: five, pair

## **Other concepts**

2 to 3 years: stop, start, loud, quiet, heavy, soft, fast

3 to four years: hard, slow, light (weight)

4 to 5 years: same, different



## **Teaching Concepts:**

- Begin with the adult sorting objects or pictures while modeling the concept word. For example you might begin by putting big animals in a big box and small animals in a small box while saying “**big** bear, **small** dog” etc
- Next the child sorts objects or pictures, while the adult models the concept word. For example the child might put the animals into big and little boxes while you say “ big bear, small dog” etc
- Next the child sorts and imitates what you say.
- Then the child sorts and says the concept word by himself. If he is not correct to model the correct word and ask him to copy you.
- Finally the child practices the structure in information carrying words games or barrier games.

# Learning concepts

## Modelling concept words in real situations:

1. Model concept words as they occur in your child's real life experiences for example, "you are getting in the bath, you are climbing over the fence, put on your blue shirt, find your big teddy". etc.
2. Talk about these words as your child observes other people in kindergarten, in television and books. "Look, Sam has a red shirt, Jack is climbing over the log, Caitlin has the little pencil."
3. Play games asking your child to place the objects in the position you ask, "put the car in the box, put the biscuit on the blue plate."
5. When he/she can perform these tasks with you in a small structured situation, see if he/she can follow tasks in everyday activities. For example "Put your bottle in your bag". Begin with logical positions but try later illogical ones, for example, "put your bottle under your bag".
6. Playgrounds and kindergym are good places to model concept words as your child moves in, over, under and through the equipment. You could also make an indoor obstacle course with chairs, tables, boxes and blankets.
7. Books about concepts such as colours, shapes and numbers as well as flap books such as "spot books" are often good for talking about concept words.
8. Barrier games are also good for working on position words. With a screen between yourself and your child take it in turns to describe what you are creating on the other side of the screen, so the other person can copy, eg: building with blocks, setting up farm yard, placing pictures onto a scene etc. Each person must have the same items on each side of the screen. If the instructions were correct the creation on each side of the screen should be the same when the screen is removed.

There are some activities for developing concepts on the Talking Matters website at [www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au) in the "Extras" section. You can also use the big and little boats and trucks provided in the Information Carrying Words section to practice 'big' and 'little'.



# Speech Sounds



# Top 10 things to do to help a child's speech

If you are waiting for an assessment or therapy to begin, or if you just want to help your child's development every day, here are some simple things you can do that make a real difference to your child's speech skills. These are general ideas and are not a replacement for speech therapy support provided by a qualified speech pathologist. Speech pathologists are trained in choosing the correct sounds to work on and in developing your child's speech in the most effective manner.

1. **Talk together every day.** The more speech your child hears the better their speech will be. Speak clearly and use the correct words for things. Don't repeat your child's errors. They may be cute but your child needs to hear the correct way of saying things to learn. Try to find some uninterrupted talking time when the TV and other noises and distractions are turned off and you just talk together.
2. **Look after your child's hearing.** Have a hearing test with a qualified audiologist if you are concerned about hearing or speech and always follow up on any ear infections. If your child has more than four ear infections in a year ask to see an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist.
3. **Get face to face with your child.** Ensure your child can see your face when you are talking to them. When you model tricky words or sounds make sure they can see as well as hear you. This helps them focus, lets them see and hear your words better and encourages them to copy you. This might mean getting down on the floor, putting your child in your lap, cuddling up together on a couch or bed or sitting them up in a high chair at the table with you.
4. **Play games with sounds.** During play, encourage sound play using speech sounds. Use real speech sounds rather than throaty, non-speech sounds. Try car games: car - putt, putt, down a ramp - weeeeeeeee, putting on brakes - eeeeeeeek, flat tyre - th, th, th, horn honking - beep, beep; farm animals: baa, moo, nay, woof; draw dots, lines and scribbles and make sounds as you go. Copy sounds that you hear around the house: doorbell - ding, microwave - beep etc.
5. **Be realistic.** Be aware of the ages children typically develop sounds and what sounds to expect from your child.

## Typical ages for sounds to develop are

3 years – m, n, h, p, w, d, g, y, k, f, b,

t

4 years – sh, ch, j, l, s

5 years – r, v

6 years – z

8 years – th



## Top 10 things to do to help a child's speech (cont.)

**6. Listen to what your child says not just how they say it.** The main reason we speak is to communicate an idea. Make sure you listen to what your child is saying and respond to that. A child who feels listened to and heard will communicate more. Once your child feels listened to and understood try the following techniques to help fix any errors.

**7. Be positive.** Use lots of encouragement and tell your child what they have done well. Use specific words. "I like the way you used your words to ask for that". "I like the way you tried that new tricky word". "You tried to fix that /s/ sound, well done" "When you looked at me and spoke clearly I could understand just what you wanted". Encourage things such as eye contact, correct speed and volume of talking as these help speech be more easily understood.

**8. Recast your child's errors.** If your child makes a mistake when talking, repeat what they say, fixing the mistake to show them the right way. Use a positive tone and repeat it a few times but keep it natural. E.g. Child "I see a shish". Adult "Yes a **fish**, I see the **fish** too, a pretty **fish**". Try repeating this same word a few more times later on, so your child gets lots of chances to hear it the right way. Notice the sound your child finds difficult and repeat other words with that sound too, again being positive and natural. "look he's in the **fish** tank, eating **fish food**, see his **fins**, now he's swimming **fast**, how **funny**"

**9. Model new words with tricky sounds.** Look at books and play games that allow you to teach your child new words with sounds your child finds tricky. Alphabet books, games and puzzles are good. Look for books with a whole page of pictures that start with a certain sound, say them for your child and ask them to watch you as you say them. Look for stories with repeated lines that include a tricky sound such as "Where is the green sheep?" by Mem Fox for /sh/ or "red fish, blue fish" by Dr Seuss for /f/. As your child is getting better at saying a new sound you could also try jokes and rhymes with that sound for extra practice.

**10. Practice tricky words.** If there are important words your child has difficulty with, such as names of family members or other important people, or things that they like to talk about often, give these some extra practice. Make a list of three to five only and put them on the fridge. Add a picture for each if your child can't read. Say each word clearly for your child and ask them to try and copy you. Try each word a couple of times per day and praise your child for trying and for getting clearer.



Also remember that children learn new sounds in stages, first in single sounds, then in words, then sentences and then in conversation last of all. Don't expect your child to remember to use a new sound all the time straight away.

# Speech practice 'dos' and 'don'ts'

*It is important to understand that your child is not lazy, but is having particular trouble with speech development. Encourage the adults in your child's life not to be negative in any way, as this is punishing and may make your child feel bad about their speech. Encourage your child positively to practise and praise all their attempts.*

## **Do's**

- Practise every day for 10-15 minutes. This achieves more than one long session weekly.
- Take turns with toys or games to make practise fun. Reward your child for good "looking and listening" during and at the end of each session.
- Make your practice times fun with games and lots of positive encouragement.
- Begin and end with an activity that your child can do well. This promotes positive success.
- Remember that if you praise your child's attempts they will continue to practise with you.
- Encourage them to look and listen by praising them. Be specific in your praise.
- If your child has difficulty, let your child know that you understand that it is hard to say the sound, or do the activity. "That was a hard one, but you tried really hard".
- Help your child achieve correct sounds by telling them specifically what they need to do with their lips and tongue.
- After your child attempts a sound, reward them immediately and say why it was good (eg, "Good, you put your teeth together for 's'"). Use descriptions that are relevant to your child as discussed with the Speech Pathologist.
- You are teaching your child through demonstration and verbal reminders. There is no "right or wrong", just different opportunities to describe how their speech production is going.

## **Don'ts**

- Don't persist if your child can't say the sound as this is both frustrating for you and your child. Repetition of incorrect sounds confuses your child as they are practising an error.
- Don't pick up your child in conversation everyday unless instructed by a professional.
- Do not progress to the next step unless your child is getting 90% correct or your speech pathologist recommends it. If you do jump up too high your child will be practicing an error and will require therapy for longer.
- Don't expect too much too soon. If your child is working at one level don't expect them to be correct at more difficult levels.
- Don't praise generally e.g. "Good try", "Good boy/girl" This isn't teaching sounds specifically

# Making speech practice fun

Children need to have fun activities provided for them to get the best possible speech practice. By choosing engaging activities we ensure children have the best chance of

- Wanting to do regular practice, which is how they learn
- Remembering what they have practiced due to chemical reactions that occur in our brains when we are enjoying ourselves
- Developing a closer relationship with their caregivers.

These fun activities help keep children engaged when practicing their target speech sounds. Use the articulation pictures provided by your speech pathologist with these activities. If your child has only one or two error sounds you may wish to make your own pictures to practice with, however children with complex speech difficulties should see a speech pathologist as things learned incorrectly can be very difficult to fix later.

- **Puzzles**

Place a pile of articulation cards in front of the child. Using a puzzle, tip out all of the pieces. Your child has to choose a card and say the word before they can put a piece in the puzzles. You can use any puzzle that the child doesn't find too hard.



- **Skittles**

Stick the articulation cards to the base or front of skittles. Have the child bowl their ball and knock over the skittles. Say the words on each skittle that has been knocked over.

- **Fishing**

Using the picture cards, attach a paper clip and use a magnet on a string to catch the “fish”. Name the pictures as they are caught. You could also make fish shapes and attach the pictures to these.

- **Feeding a puppet**

Use a puppet and the picture cards. Pretend the puppet is hungry and feed it to the picture cards. Say the words as you give the puppet each card.

- **Shine a torch**

Stick the picture cards on a wall or put them on the floor. Turn the lights down and shine a torch on the pictures as you say the words.

- **Bean bag toss**

Scatter the pictures cards on the ground. Take turns throwing a beanbag on the pictures. Name the picture the bean bag lands on.

- **Throw the dice**

Make a dice and stick the picture cards on each side of the dice. Take turns throwing the dice and saying the word the dice lands on. You can also use a number dice and take turns throwing the dice and saying as many words as the number you threw on the dice.

## Making speech practice fun (cont.)



- **Lotto Game**

Each player has one complete page of pictures as a lotto board. Two more pages of these pictures can be cut into cards that match the lotto boards. Place the cards in a pile face down in front of the players. Each player takes it in turns to pick a card off the top of the pile, say the word practicing the target sound and match it to the lotto board.

- **Memory Game**

Place pairs of cards face down in rows. Each player takes turns to turn over 2 cards and say the words, practicing the target sound. If the cards match, that player can keep the cards and have another turn.

- **Hiding Game**

Hide the pictures around the room and ask the child to find them. As they find each one, they have to say the name of the picture on the card.

- **Board games**

You can use your child's pictures with their favourite games (e.g. snakes and ladders). Place a pile of cards face down and before each player has a turn they need to pick a card from the pile. The player then needs to say the target word before they have their turn.

- **Posting**

Post the pictures into a posting box (a box with a slot cut in it). The child needs to say the word on each card before they post it.

### **Some ideas to help your child transfer their 'new' sounds into conversation are;**

- Ask your child to make a phone call, either using a real or pretend phone, to order a pizza, or talk to a friend or relative. Have a practice first and listen for the use of the 'new' sound.
- Make up stories about a topic or silly character that includes the child's target sound (e.g. fat Freddy found it hard to find his fish).
- If you go to visit a friend, ask your child to try and remember to use their 'new way' of talking while they talk to the friend.
- When going for a walk, try to find things that start with their "new sound". To make it more fun you can keep score of who finds the most things.
- Ask your child to pass messages to other family members or friends using their "new sound".

# Parent recasting

As children learn about language, they often make mistakes. Children are able to learn from mistakes and correct them when they have support adults around them helping them in a positive, supportive manner. Adults are often concerned about when and how to correct children so that it is a positive experience. We hope this information will help.

Caroline Bowen, a highly respected Australian speech pathologist has developed the concept of “Recasting” that we are sharing with you below. For further information about Caroline Bowen and her work please visit her website at [www.slpsite.com](http://www.slpsite.com). We have modified some of her content slightly but acknowledge the work below as being that of Caroline Bowen.

First, we need to consider the following points about children’s speech and language learning,

- All children are language learners.
- Part of their speech and language development is innate (which means it’s hard wired in their brains to learn it).
- Part of it is learned through the modelling (and corrections) of people around them.
- Parents are young children’s main speech and language models.
- THEREFORE, children who have parents who provide good models and are able to help them understand and learn from their errors, are advantaged in their language learning.

The term recasting refers to repeating an error-utterance back to someone, but with the error corrected. Here are some examples...

For grammar

Child: Me caught the ball.

Adult: I caught the ball.

For sentence construction

C: What in the box?

A: What’s in the box?

For vocabulary

C: He won a metal.

A: He won a medal.

For speech sounds

C: I don’t bememer.

A: I don’t remember.

Recasting provides a positive modelling correction

- Without being overtly critical
- Without interrupting the ‘flow’ of the conversation
- Without getting in the way of listening.

By using recasting not only when children make errors, but also when they say things correctly, children will feel listened too, encouraged, and confident in their ability to use sounds and words correctly.



## Parent recasting (cont.)

The following example is typical of the way parents ‘model’ when their typical language learner makes a speech error. The adult ‘recasts’ what the child says ONCE

C: Look at the big goggie.

A: Ooh yes! Look at the big doggie.

It ‘comes naturally’ to model this way; it is OK for a ‘typical’ language learner but not ‘powerful’ enough for a child with a communication difficulty. Children with language learning difficulties need to hear the model MANY, MANY more times than typical language learners for success.

What should you recast?

- Choose a target for the day
- This will usually be a current therapy HOMEWORK goal, or may be something you have noticed your child has difficulty with (speak to your speech pathologist if unsure)

What is a target? A target is a speech or language behaviour we want to encourage your child to use when communicating: e.g.,

- a speech sound might be a target
- or a grammatical structure might be a target

So how often should you recast?

- aim for 12 to 18 “recasts” per min.
- for 3 or 4 minutes of a day
- for the SAME word
- or the SAME sound pattern
- or the SAME grammatical structure
- or the SAME sentence form



Twelve to eighteen can seem a lot! The following is an illustration of how to do it. Make sure you choose a relevant target for your child. For example, don't recast ‘cow’ and ‘cows’ many times while your child is chatting about ‘key’ and ‘keys’!

Child: Him's tar talled Batmobile.

The adult ignores ‘him’s and ‘talled’ and decides to focus on two initial “k” words: ‘car’ and ‘cars’.

Child: Him's tar talled Batmobile.

Adult: His car? His car's called Batmobile? That's a strange name for a car. Our car's a Toyota. Our car's not a Batmobile! You have lots of cars! Is one of those cars a Batmobile car? (8)

Child: This tar is. It he's Batmobile tar.

Adult: This car? Oh! This car's the Batmobile car. Not this car, not this car, not this car, not this car, it's THIS car. May I play cars with you? Who's driving the Bat car? (18)

Child: Me drive Bat tar ... car

Adult (thinks): RESULT!

## Parent recasting (cont.)

It is VITAL that you recast frequently when you are providing a model. The following examples are **ineffective** ways to model



Pointless modelling:

Child: That's a bid bird.  
Adult: Not a bid bird. A big bird!  
What did the child hear? 'Bid' was heard twice and 'big' once.  
The adult cancelled him/herself out!

Ineffective modelling:

C: That's a bid bird.  
A: Not a bid bird. You don't say 'bid bird' You have to remember to say 'big bird'.  
Child tunes out. Child heard 'bid' three times, and 'big' once.

Exaggerated modelling:

C: Pease can I have one?  
A: You mean puh-leeze. Puh-leeze may I have one?  
C: [THINKS] Yeah, yeah, yeah  
This exaggerated sort of modelling is inadvisable.  
It distorts the sounds, and the child does not hear the target properly.

No modelling:

C: He hurt his weg.  
A: Hurt his weg? What are you supposed to say?  
C: [thinks] Huh?  
In this example NO speech model has been provided.

Weak modelling:

C: That's a bid bird.  
A: It is. It is a big bird.  
It 'comes naturally' to model this way; it is OK for a 'typical' language learner but not 'powerful' enough for a child with a speech or language difficulty.

**To be effective the child needs to hear the correct word MANY times to 'outweigh' the incorrect way of saying it that they have stored in their brain.**

EFFECTIVE modelling:

C: Det it down!  
A: Get what down, Oh, get this down OK. I'll get it for you.  
I think I can reach. Uh-huh, I can get it.

- When you recast a particular or sound, or language feature, remember to do it again two or three times in the same day, or as often as the opportunity presents itself.
- To get your recasts 'in', use nonsense at times and make it fun!
- "Oh I do love this little car-car-car-cardee-car-car-car. It's my best car-car-car-cardee-car-car-car. It's the best car-car-car-cardee-car-car-car on the road!" (that's 21!)
- Use songs and rhymes (Take me riding in your car-car) using a little poetic license where applicable

# Correcting speech errors in everyday speech

Children with errors need help to transfer the skills they learn in structured practice sessions into their everyday communications. This strategy has found to be very helpful in assisting children to think about the way they say things in their normal conversations.

“Fixed-up-one Routines” were developed and introduced to the speech pathology community by Caroline Bowen, a speech pathologist who specialises in childhood speech development. She has a website that provides a wealth of information at [http://members.tripod.com/Caroline\\_Bowen/home.html](http://members.tripod.com/Caroline_Bowen/home.html)

You can read more about Caroline’s work on “Fixed-up-one Routines” directly from her website at <http://www.speech-language-therapy.com/tx-self-corrections.html>

Caroline says this about self corrections:

“Adults continually make little mistakes when they speak. They barely notice these mistakes at a conscious level, and quickly correct themselves, and go on with what they are saying. This process of noticing speech mistakes and correcting them as we go is called making revisions and repairs, or self-corrections. Many children with speech sound difficulties are not very good at self-correcting. They find it difficult to monitor their speech (i.e., listen to it critically) and make corrections”

The “Fixed-up-ones” routine teaches children to notice they have made a mistake and then have a try at fixing it. The routine is also valuable for providing a way for adults to talk to children about their errors in a positive, non judgemental way. Praising a child who notices an error and has a try at “Fixing the word” is a very positive way of helping the child to ‘own’ their speech. When children are familiar with the routine it also makes it easy for adults to cue the child to have another try at the word with a comment such as “that’s got your new sound in it, I wonder if you can “fix” that one up?”

“Fixed-up-one” routines can be used for many types of mistakes. The child can use it if they are having difficulties;

- With using the correct sounds, e.g. if they said “tat” when they meant “cat”
- With including all sounds, e.g. if they said “she” when they meant “sheep”
- With pronouns, e.g. if they said “he” and they meant to say “she”
- If they left words out of a sentence, e.g. if they said “the boy running” when they meant “the boy is running”

**\* Fixed-up-one routines can be used with many different error types.**

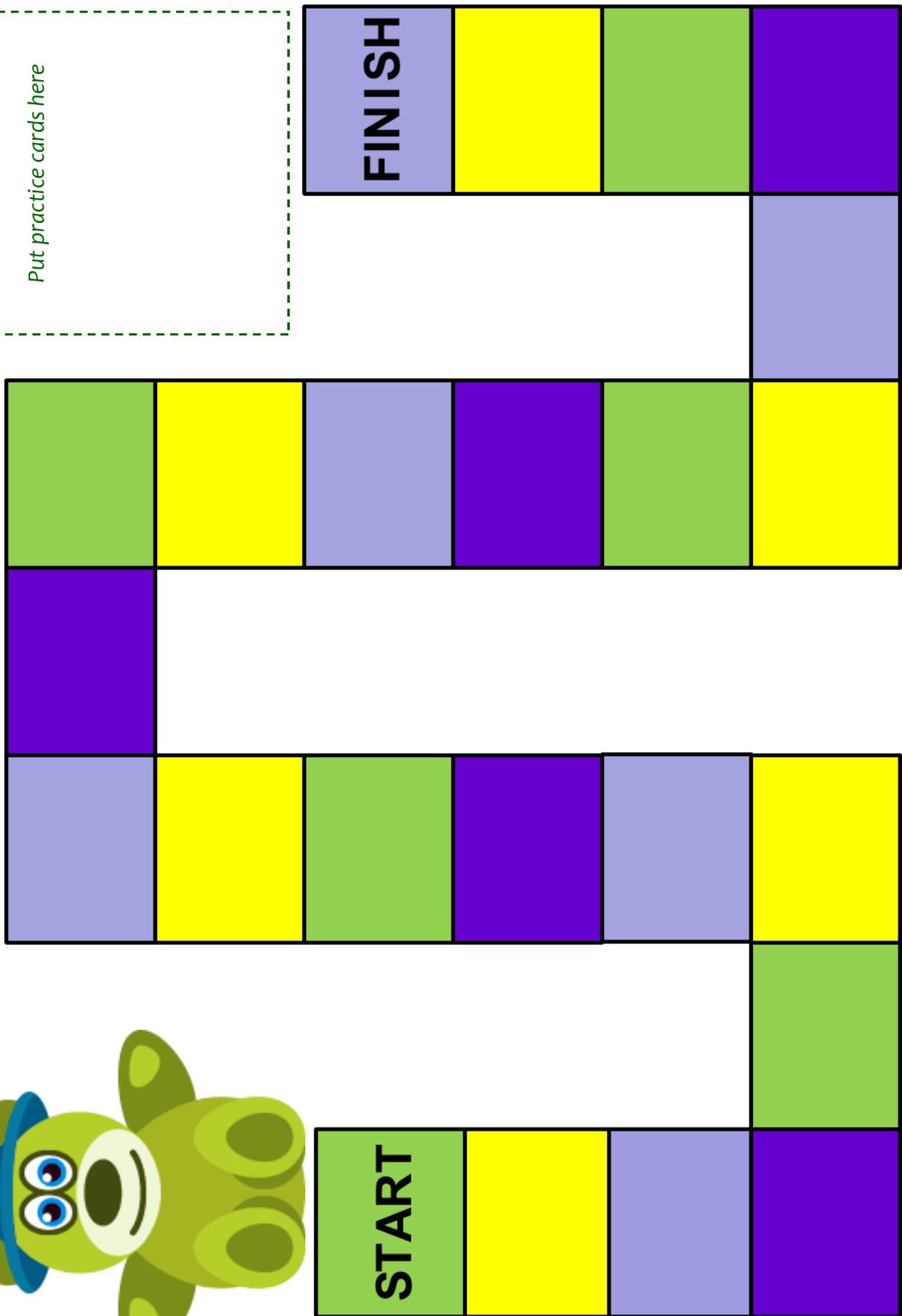
Examples of when you can use Fixed Up One Routines are available on Caroline’s website. Remember to point out some revisions and repairs in your own speech, and to praise when the child uses the strategy all by themselves. Good luck.



Put practice cards here

**FINISH**

**START**





# Hearing and Listening



# Having a hearing assessment

*Too many children with hearing loss aren't getting adequate help and are being put at risk for social, emotional, behavioural, and learning difficulties, according to the Better Hearing Institute (BHI) in a recent study.*

A large part of the problem is that children's hearing problems are often undetected. Hearing loss leaves children with a chance of developing other problems including difficulties with:

- Speech and language development
- Grades in school
- Relationships with peers
- Self-esteem and social skills
- Relationships with family

We hope that when your child has their hearing tested that they will come back with a clean bill of health, but if there is a problem we need to know so we can help. Below are some options for families living in the northern suburbs of Adelaide that we are currently aware of for having a child's hearing tested. All children who are delayed in their communication or development should get a hearing test done by an audiologist.

Hearing assessments are provided at the Child and Youth Hearing Assessment Centre. Phone 8303 1530 (County Callers phone 1300 364 100) for an appointment. There is no charge for this service but waiting times are likely to apply.

Alternatively there is also an audiologist at the Modbury hospital. To make an appointment, phone the hospital on 8161 2130. Please check with the service to see if they need a referral from your GP or your speech pathologist

Alternatively Ron Kendall is an audiologist who provides private hearing assessments for children over four years of age. He sees children in Gawler, Salisbury, Clare, Kapunda, Modbury and Tanunda. For further information and a booking, phone 8563 2149. Please confirm costs when booking.

If your child has had recurring ear infections (more than 3 occurrences) you should ask your family doctor for a referral to an Ear Nose and Throat specialist for a review. Repeated treatment with antibiotics may treat the infection but leave residual fluid behind the ear drums which reduces the clarity of your child's hearing. Reduce hearing during these important times of child development can put children at a serious disadvantage developmentally/.

\*Not all audiologists are able to complete hearing tests on young children so be sure to advise of your child's age when booking.



## Learning to listen



When a child begins to learn how to talk they must attend to the sounds in their environment. It is important for a child to develop good listening skills in order for them to listen to their environment and learn from it. By improving their ability to listen to these sounds, children will increase their learning and success in the classroom environment.

### Activities to increase a child's listening abilities:

#### In the home or childcare setting:

- 1) **Play a listening game**, sit quietly in a room and take turns identifying sounds you can hear e.g. taps dripping, creaking doors or ticking clocks.
- 2) **Make a scrap book**, or cut out pictures you find in a magazine, stick them into your scrap book and talk about the noise they make. Try and make the noises as you paste them into your scrap book.
- 3) **Play with toys**, and make their noises as you play with them. Encourage the child to listen and imitate the noises. As the child improves at this, hide a toy behind your back and make its noise, see if your child can identify what toy you are hiding and have them imitate the sound.
- 4) For very young children, ensure you have **lots of auditory stimulus around them**, so plenty of toys which squeak, rattle or make noises will encourage listening skills.
- 5) **Listen to music or songs** with instructions and do the actions as you sing the song.



#### Other ideas:

- 1) Take your child to the zoo, and talk about the animal noises as you wander around. Talk about all the different noises and what animals make that noise.
- 2) Listen for unusual sounds in the environment and encourage your child to point the sounds out to you e.g. how a coffee machine sounds, or a squeaky wheel on a trolley.
- 3) Go for a walk through a park or reserve, talk about all the things you can hear e.g. birds, wind in the trees, planes or cars. Create a game and count how many things you can hear.

# Learning to listen (cont.)

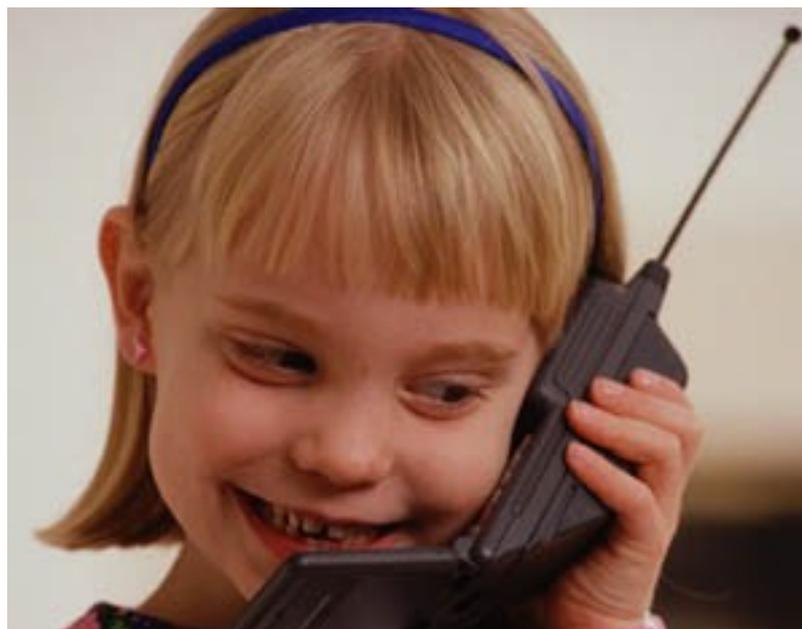
## Music:

- 1) Use musical instruments to follow along to songs on the radio, or play a song from a CD. Ask your child to follow the sounds that they hear.
- 2) For very young children make sure you have toys that play music or songs to encourage listening.
- 3) Try karaoke, sing along to tapes and watch television programs that play children's songs.
- 4) Make your own musical instruments and play them e.g. fill glasses with different amounts of water and make up your own tunes.

## Listening to the difference between sounds:

Once your child is improving at identifying sounds in their environment, ask them to identify the differences in the sounds. Talk about the sounds being loud/quiet, high or low pitched.

- 1) As you walk around a shopping centre talk about the sounds you can hear, start introducing the concepts loud and quiet e.g. "can you hear the cars outside they sound quiet, but all these people's voices together sound loud".
- 2) Play a guessing game, ask your child to close their eyes while you make a sound and see if they can guess the sound. Once they have achieved this give them two sounds, and ask them to identify the sounds and what makes them different.
- 3) Create a 'sounds' book, have pages with 'loud' 'quiet' 'high' and 'low' written on them and get your child to cut out pictures and stick them on the right page e.g. a kettle could be stuck on a loud page.



# Preparation for Literacy



# Top 10 things to develop your child's literacy

There are many things families can do at home to help their child be successful with literacy. You, as a parent, are the most important influence on your child's learning. Here are some things you can do to help your child's reading and writing skills develop. You can begin before your child starts school and continue on as your child develops their skills in literacy.

**1. Read, Read, Read!** Make a habit of reading to your child every day. Reading to your child is the one thing that has the biggest impact on your child's ability to learn to read. When you start reading to your child at an early age, your child grows up with reading as an enjoyable part of their daily routine. Mem Fox, author and educator, believes that children need to hear 1000 books before they begin to read themselves. This is easy if you begin when your child is a baby, but much harder if you wait until they begin school.



**2. Re-read favourites.** Mem Fox suggests sharing three books with your child each day; a new one, one you have read before and an old favourite that your child has heard many, many times. Children learn through repetition. Hearing a story a number of times allows your child to understand the story, link the words to the pictures, understand the rhythm and flow of the words and predict what comes next. Prediction is a skill used by fluent readers. Help your child learn to predict by giving them a chance to fill in words as you read familiar stories.

**3. Explore a range of texts.** Stories are great but there are lots of other things to explore too, such as magazines, letters, postcards, menus, newspapers, newsletters, advertisements, signs, catalogues, notes, shopping lists, birthday and Christmas cards, recipes, diaries, instructions, maps, even bills. Share all these different reading and writing experiences with your child and talk about them together.



**4. Talk, talk, talk!** Reading and writing are language skills so strong language skills mean it is easier to develop literacy. Talk to your child as much as you can in your daily activities together. Vocabulary (the number of words your child understands and uses) is particularly important. The biggest difference between good and poor readers is the size of their vocabulary. See information on developing vocabulary in the articles section of our website for ideas on developing vocabulary.

**5. Talk about books.** Help your child learn about how books work. Talk about the cover, how to hold the book and turn the pages, the title and how it gives clues to what is inside. Talk about the pictures and how the words tell about the pictures. Show how you start a book on the first page and work towards the end and how you start a page and read top to bottom and left to right. Look at lots of different books. Try making your own books. Help your child to feel confident around books.



# Top 10 things to develop your child's literacy

**6. Talk about sounds.** Talk about the sounds your child hears as a part of their life. Sing songs, tell rhymes and listen to music and stories on CD. Talk about the sounds in words. Clap out syllables and count them, talk about long words and short words. Read rhyming stories and talk about how rhyming words sound the same. Have fun making up your own rhymes. Talk about the sounds in your child's name. Talk about beginning and ending sounds in words and match things with the same sounds. Break up words into separate sounds. Play I spy.



**7. Talk about words and letters.** Look at words everywhere and talk about them. Count the letters in words and talk about long and short words. Talk about the sounds that letters make. Look at alphabet books and help your child to understand the name and the sound of the letter such as "B" is called "bee" and it makes a "buh" sound. Cut letters out of magazines and paste them. Make your own alphabet book. Find the letter your child's name starts with any where you can. Look at common words and see if you can find them on the pages of a book. Show your child that a word such as "the" has the same letters each time you find it and look for it in different places.

**8. Talk about stories.** Talk about how stories have a beginning and ending and how people in stories often have a problem to solve. Talk about the way that, in stories, we need to tell who is talking by using something like "he said". Talk about how the end of a story often has feeling words. Retell stories from pictures. Make up your own stories.



**9. Talk about what you read.** When you read together, talk to your child about what you read to develop their comprehension. Talk about what is happening, what you think about the characters, how they are feeling, what they might think, what they might do, what you would do, what might happen next.



**10. Make reading and writing a part of your family life.** Let your child see you read and write in lots of different ways. Involve them in activities such as opening the mail, writing letters, cards, and lists. Make sure your child has lots of chances through the day to use books, pencils, paper, drawing and writing materials. Join your local library and visit as a family. Show interest and pleasure in your child's attempts to read and write and put their writing and drawings on display.

\* Look at our "Starting School" pack for great ideas and activities, available on the Talking Matters website.

# Checklists



# What to expect from a child aged 12-18 months

A child aged 12-18 months would be developing the following skills

## **Understanding**

- Be able to give a toy when asked
- Turn and respond to their name
- Be able to show you 1 or 2 body parts
- Able to follow instructions with 1 information carrying word without parent pointing (e.g. get your shoe)”
- Point to familiar pictures of people, clothing etc. (e.g. be able to find “Nanna” in a photo)

## **Speaking**

- Use pointing, eye gaze and making sounds to ask for things
- Your child should be babbling (e.g. using words like bababab, mamama, tata)
- Use a small range of sounds e.g. p, b, m, t, d, n, w and vowel sounds
- Start using their first words at approximately 12 months old.
- Have 10-20 words when aged 12-15 months
- Use changes in pitch to show they are asking a question
- Attempt to copy a parent to say a familiar word
- Make animal and transport noise (e.g. moo, woof, woof, brmmmmm)
- Attempt to sing songs and rhymes (will use sounds, not words)

## **Use of communication**

- Be able to use gesture, pointing etc. to get an adults attention and show them what they want
- Show you with facial expressions they don't like something
- Take turns with noises, words (e.g. play Peekaboo and take turns saying “Boo”)

## **Play**

- Will play by them self or next to another child
- Will use real objects to play with
- Will do actions like brushing hair, pushing car

## **Story telling**

- Points to pictures when listening to a story
- Vocalises about pictures and turns pages of a book



# What to expect at two years of age

Two year olds are active and sociable and “into everything”. From around two years children go through a period of rapid growth in their communication skills, developing from a toddler experimenting with combining words to a three year old who can use sentences and hold simple conversations.

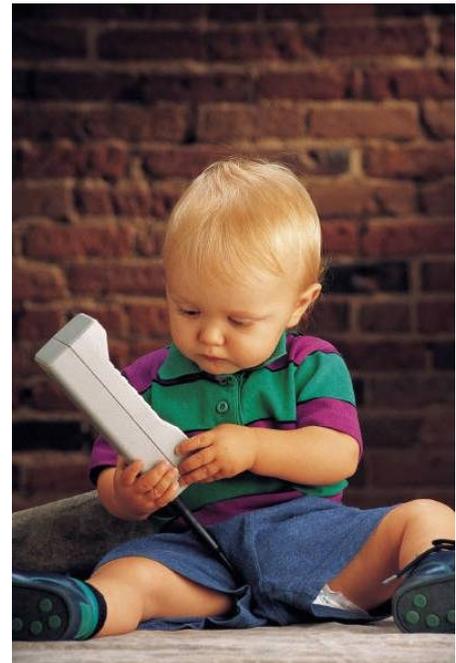
Two year olds should be using at least 50 single words and putting short phrases of two or three words together. Their words should include the names of people and objects, action words, describing words such as “big” and “hot” as well as words such as “gone, more, mine, up” and the two year olds favourite word “no”. Their speech should include a range of different speech sounds including the early developing sounds: p, b, m, n, t, d, h, w and y though they may not use them correctly in all words. Not everything that they say may be clear and they may still use some babble when trying to express themselves but familiar people should understand much of what they say.

## By two and a half years children can understand:

- what things are used for (what goes on your feet?)
- simple concepts such as big/little, hot/cold, in/out
- the difference between “he” and “she”
- how to follow simple instructions “find your shoes”

## By two and a half years children can say:

- many single words and two word combinations
- some describing words “big”, “hot”
- ask some simple questions “what’s that?” ”where’s Dad?”
- use words for possession “mine, my teddy, daddy’s shoe”
- use plurals “two dogs”
- answer yes/no, what and where questions.



If you are concerned about your child’s communication development do seek the advice of a speech pathologist. Children with **less than 50 words or who are not combining words together by two years** are at an increased risk of developing long term speech and language difficulties, but early help can make all the difference. [There is more information on the plus section of our website about how to develop your child’s communication skills.](#)

# What to expect at three years of age

Three year olds are going through a period of rapid development in their communication skills. They move from combining words together to using “real” sentences. Their speech becomes clearer too, so that unfamiliar people, not just Mum and Dad can understand them.

## Three year olds should be able to understand the following:

- Names of most common objects and actions.
- Instructions with a couple of parts, such as “get your shoes and put them by the door”.
- Concepts and describing words such as position words: in, on, off, out, up, down, under, top; size concepts such as: big, little, small, long; number concepts such as: one, two, more; and describing words such as loud, quiet, heavy, soft, hard, fast, slow.
- Function words: “find me something to cut with”, “show me which one can fly”.
- What and where questions “what is this?” “Where is the duck?” .
- Negatives: no, not, don’t.



## Three year olds should be able to do the following:

- Name most common objects and actions.
- Make sentences of up to five words.
- Use early grammar words such as: he, she, is, a, the, and word endings: John’s, cats, running.
- Answer yes/no and what/where questions.
- Tell their name, age and if they are a boy or girl.
- Use a range of speech sounds in the beginning, middle and ends of words and speak clearly enough that most of what they say can be understood by an unfamiliar person.

**If you are concerned** that your child cannot do some of these things an assessment with a qualified speech pathologist can help by:

- Telling you where your child’s development is compared with other children of the same age.
- Suggesting some strategies and activities to help your child develop any skills they may need to learn.
- Letting you know if your child would benefit from some speech therapy.
- Advising you if there is anything else that should be checked such as hearing or general development.

# What to expect at four years of age

Four year olds are confident communicators. They are able to speak clearly and fluently in long and complex sentences.



## Four year olds should be able to:

- understand and use a wide variety of words
- construct complex sentences using joining words (conjunctions) such as: and, then, so, but, because
- use most grammar correctly including pronouns: he, she, his, hers, him, her, I and verb tenses: jumps, jumped, will jump, is jumping. Your four year old may still have difficulty with some irregular plurals such as “mice” and irregular verbs such as “fell” but they should use mostly adult grammar
- be able to hold a conversation, listening and responding to what the other person says for a number of turns.
- be able to use language to join in groups and play cooperatively with other children
- be able to describe something they have done in another time or place
- be able to retell a familiar story from a book
- be able to tell how to do something familiar with a number of steps such making a sandwich or brushing your teeth
- follow instructions with a number of steps
- ask and answer who, why and how questions
- pronounce most words correctly, though they may still have difficulty with later sounds such as “r” and “th” and long words such as “hospital” and “spaghetti”
- Children who have developmental delay; a family history of speech, language or learning problems; a history of middle ear problems and children from multiple births are at particular risk of developing communication problems.

**If you are concerned that your child cannot do some of these things** an assessment with a qualified speech pathologist can help by:

- Telling you where your child’s development is compared with other children of the same age
- Suggesting some strategies and activities to help your child develop any skills they may need to learn.

Support in the preschool years can be helpful in preventing further difficulties later on which can impact on your child’s learning and literacy at school. For more information on assessments check our website at [www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au)

# What to expect at five years of age

Five year olds usually show well developed communication skills. They should be able to hold a conversation confidently with adults and other children. They should be able to use long sentences and join them together with words such as “because” and “but”. Most of their grammar should be correct though they may make occasional errors with words like “feet” and “fell”. They should be able to say most words clearly, though they may still have difficulty with the “th” and “r” sounds.

Five year olds should be able to:

- Tell you what things are for: “you cut things with scissors”
- Understand and use position words such as: on top, behind, through
- Tell their full name and address
- Use sentences of five to seven words or more
- Understand concepts and opposites such as: wet/dry, hard/soft
- Understand “same” and “different” and tell how objects are the same or different
- Count ten things and name colours
- Listen to and understand stories and retell them from the pictures
- Use past, present and future tense
- Use words such as “he” and “she” correctly
- Ask and answer “why” and “how” questions
- Describe their feelings with words such as: happy, sad, mad
- Understand time concepts such as “before” and “after”



**Five year olds are beginning school.** This means they should be ready for more formal teaching of literacy. Some of the skills needed for learning literacy include:

- Being able to hear beginning sounds in words
- Being able to match and make rhyming words
- Being able to clap or count the syllable beats in words
- Recognising letters and the sounds they make
- Being able to write their own name
- Understanding the structure of a story with a beginning, middle and end



If you are concerned about your child’s communication skills or their readiness for school a speech pathology assessment would be useful to help you learn how your child is progressing and what you can do to help them. For more information about speech and language assessments check our website at [www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au)

# How do I know if my child should see a professional?

The ideas we have provided in this booklet are a good place to start helping your child prepare for the first year of school. However approximately 10% of children have language or learning difficulties and need more than this to realise their full potential. Time and time again research has shown that children who have extra needs get the most out of it when they are given help earlier.

**Earlier support** for children who need it means children benefit from

- Learning more quickly, as their brains are most ready to learn when they are younger
- Feeling better about themselves know you are there to help
- Reduced frustration and increased feelings of success
- Shorter times in therapy
- Better outcomes– early intervention helps children to reach their potential!



**If your 4 1/2 to 6 year old has any of the difficulties** listed below, a discussion and assessment with a speech pathologist would be a good investment in their future.

- Difficulty listening, or following instructions
- Difficulty in making their ideas and feelings understood
- Unclear speech, or difficulty saying any sounds (except /r/, /th/, or /v/ which may still be developing)
- Unable to tell you a story in a logical way that makes sense
- Difficulty answering day to day questions
- If they are struggling with learning to read or following the classroom routine
- If they find the activities in this book hard to do

If your **toddler** is not able to do the things outlined in the handouts in this book for their age group they should **see a speech pathologist**. Seeking some professional assistance early can often save your child a lot of unnecessary difficulties and get them back on the right track. Some children need only a short period of therapy or some activities and guidance provided to their parents.

If a child's teacher or childcare worker raises concerns about a child's development they should be taken seriously and be properly investigated. Unfortunately children with difficulties are more often under identified and miss out on the help they need. Realising a child needs more assistance can be hard for a parent, however taking action is very important for the child's well being.

**If in any doubt the only responsible thing to do is to consult a professional. Our children's lives are too precious to gamble with.**

## About Talking Matters

Talking Matters is a private speech pathology clinic in Elizabeth East, which is in Adelaide's northern suburbs. Our team of speech pathologists work alongside occupational therapists, psychologists, speech assistants and tutors to support children to develop their speech, language, learning and literacy skills. There are a wide range of services on offer to give families choices about the types of program that will work for their children.



We hope you and your children enjoy these activities. If you would like more information, our website has lots of free fun ideas and resources. If you would like our team to help you, it's easy, just ring for an appointment. No referral is needed.



## Services available to families:

- Individualised assessment and therapy
- Range of programs to suit families budgets
- Specialised reading instruction
- Coordinated speech, psychology and OT services
- Educational software your child will want to use
- Fun activities to support home practice
- Continuity from toddlerhood through schooling
- Practical professional training sessions for educators
- Access to useful information and activities for educators and families

## Talking Matters Speech Pathology

*Helping your children reach their potential*

[www.talkingmatters.com.au](http://www.talkingmatters.com.au)

