

Supporting your child's communication

When your child makes attempts to communicate:

- **Let your child know you are listening** – look at your child, listen to your child, and respond to your child.
- Make sure your child **hears good examples** by talking to them about what is happening (e.g. “to the park”, “down the slide”, “drinking juice”).
- **Ask questions** to encourage your child to say more about their message (e.g. if your child says “painting at school”, you could ask “who did you paint with?”, “what did you paint?”).
- Give your child **time to respond** and structure their ideas.
- If you are not sure what your child means, find out. Can they show you? Can you offer them a choice? Can they describe what we use it for, where we find it or what it looks like?
- **Remember, everything your child says is important, no matter how they say it.**

Building blocks of communication development

Expressive language means communicating a message. Not all children will use spoken words to communicate. They might use gestures, pointing, sounds or another form of communication like pictures, objects or signs.

We communicate for lots of different reasons including to request (ask for something we want), reject (say that we don't want/like something), comment, question, answer, instruct and many more.

Children need to hear words lots of times before they begin to understand them. They need to hear words lots of times before they begin to use them.



Woodcock Ross, J, Tregaskis, C (2008) Social Work Communication Skills with Parents of disabled Children: A Combined Social Model and Social Work Analysis. The British Journal of Social Work, 38 . pp. 55-71

Ideas to try at home

Comment on what your child is doing

Name toys as your child plays with them (e.g. "banana" "spoon" "feeding teddy" "teddy eating banana")



If your child uses a word, repeat it back and add a word to extend their message (e.g. "big spoon", "eating banana", "teddy's ears" etc.)

Do not ask too many questions - try to make four comments after asking a question.

Keep your language simple.

Read books together

Try to read one book each day together. Point at the pictures and make noises (e.g. animal noises, vehicle noises).



Don't worry about reading every word; you can just look and talk about the pictures.

Examples of short, simple books:

- Dear Zoo
- Oh Dear
- Fox's Socks
- The Hungry Caterpillar
- We're going on a Bear Hunt

Naming games

Collect toys / items from around the house and put them in a box / bag / pillowcase.

Take one item from the bag at a time. As your child takes the item out, pause to let them name it.

If they don't name it, you can name it for them. Make it fun and remember it is not a test!



Action words

Play 'Simon Says'.

Act out a range of action words (e.g. eating, sleeping, drinking, jumping).

As they get more confident, get your child to give you an action word to act out!



More ideas to try at home

Silly Stories

Get out a collection of objects or pictures.

Start telling a story (e.g. “One day there was a dinosaur who lived in a shoe”).

The next person chooses an object or picture and tells the next part of the story using this item.



Role play

Act out parts of a familiar story (e.g. “The Ginger Bread Man”). Or use puppets/toys to act the story out.



Picture description

Take and print out pictures of people doing different things and show your child how to describe the pictures using ‘who – is doing – what’ sentences (e.g. “the boy is washing his hands” or “the lady is reading a book”).

Help your child to make similar sentences for different pictures.