



---

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

---

Townhill Infant and Nursery



Information from Speech and Language UK

**If you need any more information or support with any of the content in here please ask to speak to Mrs Miles.**

## Supporting children with Communication and Language

In typical development, children learn to talk and understand words gradually. They learn best from listening and talking to other people. You – as the child's family – play an important role in helping your child develop their early communication skills. The tips below can help develop your child's skills.

- **Get down to your child's level-** Children learn a lot from looking at your face and body language when you talk. Make it easy for your child to see you by getting down to their level and talking and playing face to face.
- **Get your child's attention before talking-** It can be difficult for children to pay attention if there are a lot of distractions or background noise. Turn down music or the TV when talking or playing together. You can get your child's attention by calling their name or gently touching their arm. Wait for your child to be ready before you begin talking.
- **Use simple language and repeat words-** Children need to hear words lots of times before they can understand the words or use them to talk. Keep your sentences short and say important words several times (e.g. 'Spade. That's a spade. A green spade. Spades are for digging').
- **Add one word-** Help your child use longer sentences by adding one word to what they say. So if your child says 'I got teddy', you could say 'Yes, you've got a *fluffy* teddy!'. You can find more ideas for learning words here.
- **Pausing-** Pausing gives your child extra time to think about what they want to say. If you ask your child a question, pause for at least ten seconds to let them answer- this can seem like a long time! Pausing can also allow your child to join in with a song, rhyme, or word without feeling under pressure. For example, 'Jack and Jill went up the ... (hill)', 'I've got one, two,... (three)'.
- **Use comments not testing questions-** Testing questions are questions that we already know the answer to. For example, we might ask 'What colour is that?' or 'What's this called?' even though we already know the answer. Testing questions can make children feel under pressure and they might respond with just one word, or no words at all. Comments put less pressure on your child because they can choose how they want to answer. For example, if we comment 'Wow I love this purple car' your child might tell you about their favourite colour, their car, or something else completely!
- **Choices-** Choices are a great opportunity for your child to practice the words they are learning. Show your child two things to choose between- 'shoes or wellies?', or 'milk or water?'. Your child can show you what they want by pointing or by trying to say the word.
- **Follow your child's lead-** Children learn words most easily when the words they hear match what they are paying attention to – so it is easier for them to learn the word 'ball' if they are playing with a ball. Join in with your child when they play. For example, if your child is driving cars around the walls – you could do the same with your cars. Following your child's lead can help you notice when they are ready to hear a new word, and when they are busy playing and don't want to be interrupted! If your child looks towards you, points, or shows you something- say the words you

think they need. For example, if your child shows you their car going backwards, you can say 'Reverse!' 'Our cars are reversing'.

- **Songs, nursery rhymes and music-** Children can learn words and actions through songs and nursery rhymes. Listening or moving to music can also help get them ready to notice sounds which can be important for learning speech sounds. Share songs, nursery rhymes, and music with your child in any of the languages that you use at home.
- **Share stories-** Looking at books together is a great way to help your child learn new words. Start by simply talking about the pictures that your child seems interested in. See our information on book sharing.

We have suggested some of our favourite toys for supporting speech, language and communication skills below. Some of these will be better for children who communicate less, and some are more suited to children who understand lots of words and communicate more.

### Imaginative play

Dressing up clothes, doctor or vet sets, teddy/dolly tea sets, Playmobile/Happyland... you can use any of these toys to join in with your child's imaginative play. Talking about imaginative play at the same time helps them to learn new words and develop their creativity.



### Messy play

Messy play helps with lots of areas of children's development, including their communication skills. Things like water play, sand play, chalk boards, finger painting and playdough all help children to develop their awareness of how things feel. Talking while you play will help your child learn new words for actions (e.g. pour, squash, squeeze, pull, rub), as well as words to describe colours and how things feel.



I

### Inset puzzles

Inset puzzles have pieces that fit inside holes on a wooden tray or board. Name the pieces as you and your child put them in to help them learn new words. Give them choices between two pieces ("Do you want the car or the fish?"). You can also use words to talk about when things fit or when they're "too big", "too small" or "stuck".



## **Musical toys**

Listening to, and playing, music can help develop your child's attention and listening skills. These skills are really important for communication skills. Games to try include:

- Dance or clap to the beat of the music
- Copy each other's tune or rhythm
- Play musical bumps or musical statues
- Drum together: beat out a rhythm together using drums or household objects like pans and spoons.

## **Repetitive books**

Repetitive books are books that have the same words and sentences repeated in a pattern. Examples include Dear Zoo, The Gingerbread Man and Where's Spot?

Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once, as repetition helps children to understand and remember the words that they hear. Children love to join in with the bits that they remember – try pausing at the end of a line your child knows well to see if they can fill in the missing word.

## **Simple lotto boards**

Lotto boards can help children develop their attention skills and learn words to name things. Talk to them about the pictures they find – name them and talk about colours, size and shape. Slowly increase how much time you spend playing or how many pictures you use. This will help your child pay attention for longer amounts of time.

## **Colour and shape matching; counting games and activities**

Examples of these types of games include Dotty Dinosaurs, Red Dog Blue Dog, marble run, click clack car tracks, Mr Potato Head, Pop up Pirate, Kerplunk, and Lego – but there are many others available as well.

These games can help children learn important words. Talk about the colours and shapes that you can see while you are playing and then later around your home.

## **Puppets**

Puppets are a great way to develop imagination and story-telling skills in children. Make up stories and act them out with puppets or re-tell familiar stories that you already know.

## **Coloured bricks and threading beads**

Talk about what comes first, second and last while you are putting coloured bricks and threading beads in order with your child. Understanding these sorts of words will eventually help your child to understand more complicated words like first, next, last, before, after, and other words that talk about time.

## Board games

Playing board games helps children learn how to take turns, which is an important communication skill. Board games also help children to develop their attention skills and to think about other people while they are playing. Children need to be able to understand the rules of board games, so generally these work best for older children.

## Rhyming lotto, rhyming books

Having fun with words and rhymes can help children learn skills they need for reading and writing. Talk about rhyming words and sing songs and rhymes with your child too. Thinking about the different sounds in words will help children learn to read and write later.

At Townhill, we have created an oracy progression of skills for the school. We will be using this to ensure we are supporting children with all elements of their communication and language. These skills are what we expect of children in each age group and we provide plenty of opportunities for children to practise their speaking and listening skills.

	Birth to 3	3-4 years	Reception
<b>Physical</b>			
<b>Voice</b> - Pace of speaking - Tonal variation - Clarity of pronunciation - Voice projection	Copy words  Begin to use intonation, pitch and changing volume when 'talking'	Begin to speak audibly to a familiar person  Use intonation, pitch and changing volume when talking	Speak <b>audibly</b> to someone they know  Uses intonation and rhythm when speaking
<b>Body Language</b> - Gesture and posture - Facial expression and eye contact	Copy gestures	Begin to independently use some gestures when talking e.g. waving	Look at the person who is talking to them. Use some gestures when talking e.g. pointing
<b>Linguistic</b>			
<b>Vocabulary</b> - Appropriate vocabulary choice	Begin to make themselves understood	Use a wider range of vocabulary in the correct context	Understand words and use in the correct context. Use talk and new vocabulary in play
<b>Language</b> - Register - Grammar	Put 2-5 words together	Use longer sentences of four to six words	Use conjunctions to join, when speaking. E.g. and, because with support from adults  Blend 3 or 4 phonemes

<b>Social and Emotional</b>			
<b>Working with Others</b> - Guiding or managing interactions - Turn-taking	Develop speech <u>in</u> <u>pretend</u> play: 'putting the baby to sleep' or 'driving the car to the shops'	Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions  Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."  Understand how to listen carefully and why listening is important	Use speech in co-operative play  Use language associated in turn taking  Join in and organise roleplay with friends  Use talk to help work out problems and organise activities
<b>Listening and Responding</b> - Listening actively and responding appropriately	Follow a simple instruction e.g. "Name- put on your shoes"  Start to develop conversation, often jumping from topic to topic	Understand a simple question or instruction that has two parts, such as: "Get your coat and wait at the door"	Start conversations and join in with group ones  Listen to and understand instructions when busy  Understand an instruction that has 2 parts
<b>Confidence in Speaking</b> - Self-assurance - Liveliness and flair	'Talk' in the presence of others	Start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns	Share opinion with confidence in a familiar group
<b>Audience Awareness</b> -Taking account of level of understanding of the audience			Show an awareness of who you are speaking to and adjust appropriately

<b>Cognitive</b>			
<b>Content</b> -Choice of content to convey meaning and intention - Building on the views of others	Sing simple nursery rhymes	Sing a large repertoire of songs  Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story	Use words more specifically to make meaning clear  Use because to explain intention
<b>Structure</b> - Structure and organisation of talk			List events in some detail  Use important details to show awareness of the listener  Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well- formed simple sentences
<b>Clarify and Summarise</b> - Seeking information and clarification through questioning	Understand and respond to <u>simple questions</u> about 'who', 'what' and 'where' (but generally not 'why')	<u>Understand and</u> respond to 'why' questions, like: "Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?"	Ask questions to clarify ideas
<b>Self-regulation</b> - Maintaining focus on task - Time management	Listen to other people's talk with interest but can easily be distracted by other things	Begin to listen attentively in small groups	Listens attentively in different situations. E.g. small groups, class and assemblies
<b>Reasoning</b> - Giving reasons to support views - Critically examining ideas and views expressed			Give opinions, which include simple conjunctions