

Let's Get  
Talking!

**How we can help our children to  
develop their listening and  
talking skills**



**This booklet is to help parents and carers support children to develop their speech and language skills. We hope that you find it helpful.** Every child follows their own milestones for language development. But overall by 12 months a baby recognises and reacts to the sound of his or her name. By 2 years a child has a vocabulary of almost 300 words and can respond to simple commands. By 3 years he or she has almost 1000 words and can give his or her name and age.

### **Strategies to help support your child's speech and language:**

- **TURN OFF THE TELEVISION and REDUCE THE TIME ON IPADS AND PHONES**
- **DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTARY**
- **MATCH PLUS 1**
- **PARALLEL PLAY**
- **ANTICIPATION GAMES**
- **TURN TAKING GAMES**
- **CHOICES**
- **RECASTING**

# TURN OFF THE TELEVISION and REDUCE THE TIME YOU/OR YOUR CHILD SPENDS ON AN IPAD OR PHONE

It is really important that your child spends time playing alone or with you without the distraction of the television. Try to set times for television programmes rather than having the television on in the background. This will enable your child to hear your voice and for your child to realise the importance of communication.

It is easy to hand a child an i-pad, phone or switch on the television to provide distraction for us to get on with other things. However, it is so important that your child has time every day to talk and play without that distraction.



# DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTARY

"Descriptive commentary" provides a (gentle) running commentary on what your child is doing and what is happening.

**How to do it:**

- Begin by "**following the child's lead.**" This means letting your child choose HOW to play, using their own ideas.
- Try not to ask questions or give directions.
- **Observe** them closely so you can see the focus of their attention, what they are interested in and what they're doing.
- **Describe what you see.**
- Your commentary needs to be suited to your child's stage of language development, so if your child is at an early stage of development, they will need a more simplified description. E.g. use 1 word if your child uses single words, 2 if they use 2 etc.
- **Keep your language simple and repetitive.**
- Talk about what your child is doing as they are doing it.
- For example - "bread ..... cutting the bread ..... mmmmmm ..... eating bread."
- It's important to **pause** and allow silences between your comments. This gives spaces for your child to copy comments or communicate in some way e.g. look, smile, sound, gesture or offer their own comment.
- Respond warmly and positively to all attempts to communicate with you.

## MATCH + ONE

Here's how to do it :

- If your child says "cat" match what they say + one more word e.g. "cat gone".
- If your child says "mummy car", match what they say + one more word e.g. "mummy's driving car" or "mummy's blue car" or "mummy's dirty car."
- If your child says "truck go fast" match what they say + one more word e.g. "big truck go fast" or "red truck go fast".

## PARALLEL PLAY

This starts with letting the child lead their play.

- Get down to your child's level and copy what they are doing, including copying any noises, babble or words that they may say.
- Mirror your child's body language as closely as possible. If they lie on the floor, you do too. If they push a car backwards and forwards across the floor, get another car and do exactly the same thing. If they stop, you stop .... If they start again, you move again. Keep copying closely.
- This is a powerful way to help children to begin to understand that interests and attention on a task can be shared and that their actions and the sounds they make have an impact on someone else (i.e. what they're doing is valued by others) and this feels good!

# ANTICIPATION GAMES

## Ready, Steady, Go!

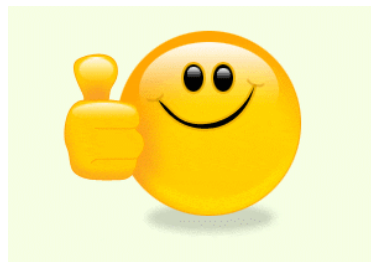
- Play "Ready, Steady .... Go!" in a range of situations, especially activities that your child is interested in. This could be cars, blowing bubbles, water or sand..... for example: pushing cars, or rolling them down a slope, or going down a slide ...
- Once the game is established, wait for a response from your child, before saying "Go". The response could be eye contact, making a sound or saying a word.
- Other games and activities could include songs such as "round and round the garden" (waiting before the "tickle you ...." Bit for a response; or "row row row your boat" (waiting before making a screaming noise after the "don't forget to scream" bit.
- Anticipation and turn taking games help to build up skills for holding conversations, such as listening and answering.



## TURN TAKING GAMES

- Turn taking games can be played in lots of ways, such as taking turns to post things into a box, roll a ball to each other, roll cars down a ramp, sand into a container with a spoon, build a tower with bricks, cuddle a teddy .... The list is endless
- Use activities or toys that your child is interested in, so that they want to do it and are motivated.
- Use the language of turn taking and start off with just 1 adult and 1 child e.g. "my turn", "your turn".
- Use a gesture such as touching your chest to show it's "my turn" or "your turn" and encourage your child to copy you.
- Use a prompt, e.g. "wait" and a gesture (your palm facing out) to help your child learn to wait for their turn.

Praise them for good waiting even  
if it's only a few seconds



# CHOICES

- Give a choice of two items, such as "orange or apple?" This can be done throughout the day. Use toys, videos, food, drink, clothes etc.
- Say each choice and show the items at the same time e.g. "red t-shirt, or blue t-shirt?"
- Children can reach for, point to or make a sound to indicate their choice.
- Once they have made their choice, say the words again using the word level they are working with e.g. "orange" if they are at a single word level.
- Offer a choice even if you can guess what the answer will be. If your child points to the one you know they don't like or don't want still give them the item to encourage them to learn how to make the right choice.
- Have a special time with your child every day when they can choose an activity, toy, book etc and you follow their lead.







# RECASTING

- Support sound production by repeating back to your child clearly and correctly what they have said.
- For example if they say "ilk ease" you would say "milk please"
- Or if they say "I goed to the shop" you would say "you went to the shop"
- DO NOT ask your child to repeat it back to you again as it's enough for them to hear you saying the word/words clearly and you may knock their confidence if they are always having to repeat after you.....

