



# Communication and Language Stay and Learn



Guidance to your child's learning  
and development in the early years  
foundation stage



# Developmental Stages

## **12 months +**

At this age, your child might:

- understand very simple commands like 'no', or 'clap your hands'
- develop first words (5 or more)
- know their own name
- relate some objects, such as putting a spoon in a cup

## **18 months +**

At this age, your child might:

- understand action words like "sit down", "drink", or "come here"
- copy frequently heard short sentences
- copy sounds of objects like cars or animals
- name objects like ball, cup or sock
- follow simple instructions like "give me the ball"
- by 2 ½ years, use 3-4 words in a sentence



# Developmental Stages

## **3 years +**

At this age, your child might:

identify colours

describe an object

uses many pronouns like I, he, she, or we

understand describing words like big, wet, or small

answer questions logically

use 4-5 words or longer in a sentence

understand the use of objects

## **4 years +**

At this age, your child might:

respond to “why” questions

describe an activity like making a sandwich or getting dressed

name members of a category, like “name a fruit”

indicate body parts such as head, knee, or leg

compare objects

understand complex instructions, like “put the small cup under the chair”

understand time concepts like yesterday, tomorrow, or last week

# Be Face to Face



Spend time being face to face with your child at their level. Try kneeling or laying on the floor during play to encourage eye contact.



Using facial expressions alongside words like 'wow', 'sad', or 'happy' can help make connections between words and real life experiences.



Making eye contact is an early communication skill. Try getting on your child's level and making eye contact while talking to them. You can also encourage eye contact by playing 'peek-a-boo'!



Smiling is a great way to build your child's non-verbal communication skills. Smile regularly when making eye contact and return your child's smiles with enthusiasm!



# Speak Clearly

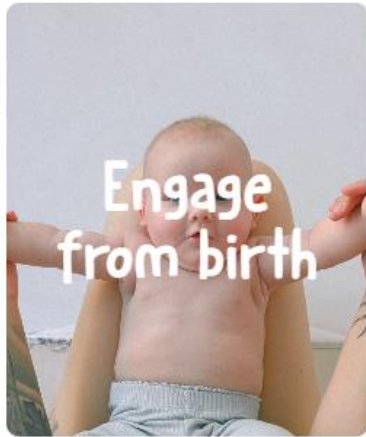


Children pick-up speech from the people around them. Pronounce your words clearly and use full sentences to help them learn, even if they don't yet understand everything you say.

Give children time to learn the words you say by speaking slowly and clearly.

Try not to use made-up words, like "are wu my widdle baby", as tempting as it might be! Instead, use real words slowly and in a clear, high pitch.

# Engage



Start talking, making eye contact and using facial expressions as soon as your child is born. Children are learning about speech and communication from day one

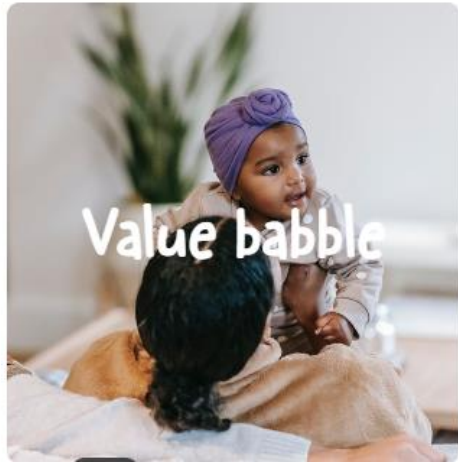
Make time to respond to your child with enthusiasm. Showing interest helps them to learn about the back and forth of communication

Actively listen and respond to your child. Make eye contact when they are making noises or speaking to you. This helps to build their understanding of communication and grows their confidence.

Technology can be a great tool, but too much can distract children from learning speech, language and communication skills. Try setting 'screen time' limits, and promote language learning through fun activities.

Adults can get distracted by technology too! Your child needs time with you and without distraction to build their communication skills.

# Respond



Value babble



Introduce new words



Talk at your child's language level



Repeat words

Babble sounds are a stepping stone to language. Try translating your child's sounds to show them that you are paying attention. For example, if your child looks at a car through the window and babbles, try saying "oh look, there's a car" while pointing yourself.

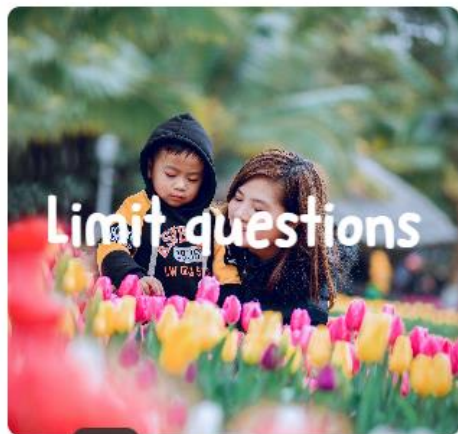
Introduce new words by adding new words on to familiar things your child says. For example, if your child says "a car", you could say "yes that's right, it is a car. It is a BIG, BLUE, car!"

Read age-appropriate books with your child, and in everyday speech, try replying to your child using sentences that are a few words longer. For example, if they say, "sock off", respond with "yes, we're taking your sock off"

Repetition is key to making language stick. Try repeating songs you like singing together, or ask older children to repeat sentences back to you to check their understanding.



# Make time to talk



Sometimes children can be overloaded with questions. Too many questions can inhibit language and communication. Try to comment rather than asking lots of questions and avoid closed 'yes/no' questions.

Give children extra time to process what you have said and to think of an answer. Listen well and wait patiently.

Children need extra time to process the things they have heard and to form their own words. Try not to interrupt their speech or thinking where possible.

You can make talking together fun and enjoyable. Try playing games using words, and make learning new words enjoyable. Take a look at our activities for inspiration. Inspire me!





# Communication and Language Top Tips

- When you talk to your child get down to their eye level.
- Say your child's name before you start talking to them,
- Offer your child choices throughout the day.
- Talk to your child about what they are doing.
- Try to keep your sentences short when you are describing things to your child.
- Talk about the pictures in your child's favourite book.
- Enjoy fun songs and nursery rhymes.
- If your child says something incorrectly, rather than correcting them say it back the right way.
- Take a book out with you when you go out with your child.
- Take turns with your child when you are doing an activity.
- Look and talk about family photographs with your child.
- Join the local library and allow your child to choose a favourite story.
- Sing the same song again and again, children love repetition.
- Listen to your child when they talk and give them time to finish.
- Be patient give your child time to take part in a conversation.



**18 months +**

At this stage, your child might be starting to ask questions, form short sentences and understand simple instructions.

# Activities to support Communication and Language

## 1. Action playing

Try collecting some of your child's toys together, and ask your child to make their toys do specific things, like jumping, walking or flying. For example, "can you make Teddy jump?" See if your child can do the same action as their toy, and tell them what they are doing, like "you are jumping just like Teddy!". Try adding new actions over time!

## 2. The great outdoors

The outdoors has lots of opportunities to help your child learn language skills. Next time you are in the garden, at the park or walking to the shop, talk about the things that your child focuses on. Try setting mini challenges, like finding different things such as stones, leaves or grass. Try describing the things they find, like "wow, that's a big leaf", or "that grass is very bumpy!"

## 3. Learning Languages

If you speak more than one language, or have family members that speak other languages, chatting in your family's other languages is a great way for children to learn and to build relationships with family members. Your child's brain can pick up the difference between languages and hearing multiple languages is not confusing to them.

## 4. Taking turns

Taking turns whilst playing and talking can help your child to learn communication skills. When playing together with a toy, try saying "my turn" and playing for a minute, then saying, "your turn" and passing the toy back. Get other children, friends and family members involved and practise taking turns playing and talking.



**3 years +**

At this age, your child might be using more descriptive language, asking lots more questions and using longer sentences. They may talk about things that happened in the past and the present.

# Activities to support Communication and Language

## 1. Role Play

Try joining in with your child's imaginary play. This can be anything from tea-parties with Teddy, or playing firefighters. Show your child new ideas, such as how a firefighter sprays water or how Teddy stirs tea. Use verbs or action words to describe what you and your child are doing, like "the firefighter sprays water everywhere and soaks everything!", or "teddy sips her tea because it is very hot!".

## 2. Memory Games

Describe a recent activity from everyday life, like yesterday's walk in the park, or the trip to the supermarket. Take turns to remember things, like "what did we buy from the shop?", or "we saw a big red bus near the park yesterday, what else did we see at the park?". Use lots of praise and help your child to expand sentences, like "and what colour was it?", or "was it big or small?".

## 3. What am I?

Try collecting objects from around the house and ask your child to close their eyes while you hide one behind your back. Describe the object to them until they guess what it is, for example "I am yellow, I am curved, I need to be peeled, I am a tasty snack" (a banana). Give as many clues as needed until your child guesses the object. Take turns and ask your child to put an object behind their back and describe it to you.

## 4. Weather Master

Ask your child to check what the weather is like and decide what they will wear outside. You can help by asking lots of questions like "is it wet enough to wear wellies?", or "what did you wear last time it was sunny?". This will help them expand their communication and understanding of how language can help them to plan.





# Speech and Language Web Links

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/>

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/talking-point/parents/ages-and-stages/>

<https://tinytalkers.co.uk/>

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/media/1773/top-10-toys-factsheet.pdf>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/activities/zjh8hbk>

