

Early Language Development



When do young children learn to talk?

Young children learn to talk through listening to, and learning from, everyone around them. Over time their language and communication skills develop.

Usually children's understanding develops before their talking, so we expect young children to be able to understand more than they can say.

There are 'typical milestones' we use as a guide only to assess children's development when they are learning to talk.

General guidelines from **ICAN** are:-



1 year old Children start to say their first words

18 months old Children should be able to follow simple instructions. Eg. 'Kiss mummy' or 'give it to Daddy'

2 years old Children typically start to put 2-3 words together in simple sentences. E.g. 'Daddy work' or 'more juice.' We would expect a child to be able to say about 50 words, but be able to understand many more

3 Years old Children should be able to understand longer instructions such as 'put the teddy in box' or 'get your coat, hat and shoes'. They should now be linking the words into sentences around 4-5 words long.

3 ½ years old Children should be able to be understood by unfamiliar people

5 years old Children should be using well-formed sentences.

What can you do at home to help?

You don't need to be an expert to help your child develop good communication skills. All you need is a listening ear and the willingness to chat to your child whenever you can. Here are some ideas.



- Get your child's full attention first. Get down to their level and get their attention before speaking or asking a question - say your child's name first to encourage them to stop and listen.
- Follow your child's lead when communicating and respond to what they say first. This might take some pressure off to actually speak.
- Help develop listening skills, as these are vital when children are learning to talk. So, play lots of games that mean that your child has to listen. E.g. "ready steady go" games;- blowing bubbles, listening for the word 'go'.
- Give time for your child to answer. Often children need time to put their thoughts together before answering.



Top tips for talking with your child:

- Talk to your child when you're playing together.
- Get into their zone and talk about what they are looking at or playing with - they will learn language faster that way.
- Have fun with nursery rhymes and songs, especially those with actions.
- Encourage your child to listen to different sounds, such as cars and animals. This will help your child's listening skills.
- Gain your child's attention when you want to talk by using their name and getting eye contact
- Increase vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. "Do you want juice or milk?"
- Talk about things as they happen, e.g. when you're both unpacking the shopping.
- Listen carefully and give your child time to finish talking. Take turns to speak.
- Always respond in some way when your child says something.
- Help your child to use more words by adding to what they've said, e.g. if they said "ball" you might say, "Yes, it is a big, red ball."
- If your child says something incorrectly, say it back the right way, e.g. "Goggy bited it." "Yes, the dog bit it, didn't he?"
- Try and have special time with your child each day to play with toys and picture books.
- Limit TV time. When your child does watch TV, try to watch TV together so you can talk about what happens.

Some games you can play..



Grab a 'treasure' box (any old box will do!) and fill it with everyday items. Younger children will enjoy pulling the things out and telling you what they are. If your child is a bit older, try to see if they can guess what you've got from your clues... "it's round and hard" "a ball!"



Play shops. Your child can come into your shop and pretend to buy something. If there's something they don't know the name of, you can give them choices "do you want the comb or the glasses?"



Play hide and seek or have treasure hunts to help learn position words..."I'll give you a clue, it's under the cushion". Remember to show them too, if it's a new word.

Remember routines are important

Bath, Book, Bed Routine



This routine helps children by giving them stability and enables them to know what to expect.

A bedtime routine helps children understand that it is time to relax, and gives them a feeling of predictability and safety.

Children learn so much from snuggling up and listening to a story before bed - their vocabulary expands, their imagination develops and they learn about the world around them

Sharing a story at bedtime is a chance for you and your child to relax and enjoy a special moment together, giving them security and developing their confidence.

Useful websites

Talking Point

I CAN Help

Babbling Babies

Toddler Talk

Chatting with Children

The Communication Cookbook