

## IDEAS TO HELP YOUR CHILD'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Below are some strategies and activities that may help develop your child's language and communication skills. It may be helpful to choose just one or two ideas to start with, and then gradually try adding more.

- Waiting and Listening:** It's important that adults allow themselves time to just observe, wait and listen when spending time with young children. This allows children the quiet time and space they may need to start communications with us. It can feel a little strange remaining quiet while our children play, but it is important that we don't always 'fill the silence' with lots of chatter. It is helpful to sometimes wait for our children to start the interaction, and then respond to that.
- Being Face-to-Face:** When playing or talking with your child, get down to their level to ensure you are face-to-face. This will encourage eye contact which helps your child to watch and pay attention to you when you are talking and will also help them to listen to you. It will also make it easier for you both to share in an activity together.
- Taking Turns:** Play anticipation and turn taking games such as peek-a-boo, Ready...Steady...Go!, lift the flap books, rolling a ball/car to each other, taking turns to blow bubbles or build a tower etc.
- Copying:** Copying is an important part of learning how to communicate and talk. You can help your child by encouraging all of their vocalisations, including saying their noises and words back to them, so they can hear you saying them. Having fun making animal noises and other meaningful noises (such as 'brum brum' for a car, and 'brrrrrr brrrrr' for a phone) is also a fun way to encourage noise making and copying.
- Following your Child's Lead:** Follow what your child wants to do in play, while commenting and adding on language (see below)
- Commenting:** Try occasionally commenting on what your child is doing using just one/two words or very simple phrases to describe what's happening (e.g. "Running!", "Jessica's eating", "Dolly's sleeping", "Going up the stairs" etc.).
- Labelling Action Words:** Carrying out activities involving lots of actions and labelling these would be particularly helpful, such as:
  - Craft activities: sticking, cutting, drawing, pressing, rolling etc.
  - Cooking: stirring, mixing, pouring, cutting, rolling, pressing etc.
  - Action Games: Simon Says "Jump, sit/lie down, run, walk, clap, stamp your feet" etc.
  - Action Rhymes: Such as "This is the way we brush our hair, clean our teeth, walk to school, eat our dinner, wave goodbye etc..... on a cold and frosty morning"
- Keeping Language Simple:** When chatting and when giving instructions, keep your language clear and simple. Use sentences that contain only 2 or 3 key words (E.g. "Fetch your coat and shoes", "Give Daddy the book").

- Reduce Questioning:** Commenting is much more useful than asking questions at this early stage of language development, for example:
  - Instead of asking "What are you doing?" try "Bobby's playing trains"
  - Instead of asking "What's that?" try "There's a dog"
- Adding on language:** Add on another word to whatever your child says, this will help expand their language. For example if your child says one word (e.g. "Dog!"), you say two words (e.g. "Big dog!"), and if they say two words (e.g. "Daddy running"), you say three words (e.g. "Daddy's running fast!").
- Giving Choices:** Give your child choices of what they can eat/drink/wear/play to encourage communication. Have one option (object) in one hand and one in the other and say (while showing the relevant object), "Do you want orange or milk?" (for example). If your child points, you add the language (e.g. "You want milk....milk").
- Creating a need to Communicate:** Make sure that there is a need for your child to communicate in their home environment. For example if your child is able to access all of his/her toys, and can help themselves to anything they might need then there is less need to communicate. You can create communication opportunities by moving some toys out of reach (but in view) so that your child has to ask for them. When your child makes an attempt to request (including pointing/reaching), clearly model the language they could use (but don't insist that they repeat it), e.g. "car.....want car.....car" and give them the item.

*If you would like any further support or advice regarding these ideas, please don't hesitate to contact your speech and language therapist.*