

Ways to nurture language development

- Talk to your child from the earliest weeks and months. What is said early on may not be understood but your voice will communicate your feelings and your baby should be interested and responsive.
- Young children benefit greatly from individual time spent with their parent or carer. Turn off the TV or radio to be sure that the environment is quiet and free from distractions. It is best to be face to face with your child and on the same level. Playing on the floor together or sitting at the table means that you can share an activity and your attention is focused.
- Follow your child's lead, look to see what interests him and play with the toy that he chooses. Talk about what he is doing.
- Make simple comments about the toy or what is happening in the 'here and now'.
- Keep your language simple, use short phrases and easy vocabulary to start.
- Slow the pace of what you say and leave a pause after each phrase or sentence.
- Use tuneful or slightly exaggerated intonation because it is more interesting for children to listen and attend to.
- Repeat words many times as children need to hear the same word repeatedly before attempting it themselves. Say things such as 'teddy's eyes, teddy's nose, teddy's ear' etc
- It is helpful to use routines such as meal times, bath time, dressing etc for talking as they provide opportunities to use the same language repetitively
- For example, when going out 'shoes on', 'coat on', 'hat on' etc
- Expand a little on what your child says
Eg; child; 'there's a big dog'
adult; 'yes' it's a big, black dog'
- Reduce your amount of talking if necessary and leave space for your child to talk and to think about what he will say next.
- Repeat sentences back to him. Accept unclear words without pointing them out or correcting them and say the sentence again clearly
Eg; child; 'the dross is wet'
adult; 'yes, the **grass** is wet'
- Use gesture alongside words to help put your message across and encourage use of gesture in your child.
- Make sounds in play or add sounds to pictures in books encouraging your child to have fun making sounds too.
- Lots of praise and encouragement will motivate your child and help them enjoy communicating.