

Tips for talking to your baby

It will make a difference

Talking and listening to children from the moment they're born helps them develop good language and communication skills. This enables them to listen and express themselves well. It also helps them to learn and develop good relationships.

Most brain development occurs from birth to age two, so babies and toddlers need stimulation as much as they need nourishing food. The best way to stimulate babies' brains is to talk to them more.



Talking and listening to your child will benefit you both. Your child will feel valued and loved, and the two of you will form a close bond with each other.

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.

When do I start?

It's never too early to start talking to your child. Babies can communicate before they start talking and want to interact with people, especially family. By moving their mouth or limbs, cooing, babbling or smiling, your baby is sharing experiences with you and looking for a response. Whenever possible, try to respond by making eye-contact, smiling and talking back.



Talk with me, play with me, read with me, sing with me. Then I'll know what it's all about*.

* Basic Skills Agency, Wales.

Toddlers will use some words to communicate with you, but they understand far more than they can say. By talking and listening to them you will motivate them to keep talking, which will improve their language skills.

Talk about what you and your child are doing throughout the day

Talking to your child can fit easily into your daily routine. Talk about the things you see when you're on the bus or walking to the shops. Chat to your baby during bath time, or recite a nursery rhyme while changing their nappy. The supermarket is a good place to talk to your toddler and introduce new words, as your child is sitting in the trolley facing you. Gain their attention and then describe some of the items as you put them in the trolley.

Try not to ask your child too many questions. Instead, tell them about things, especially the things they show an interest in, like a favourite toy.

Talking tips

Help your child develop good language and communication skills with these tips.

1. Talk to your child when you're playing together.
2. Have fun with nursery rhymes and songs, especially those with actions.
3. Encourage your child to listen to different sounds, such as cars and animals. This will help your child's listening skills.
4. Gain your child's attention when you want to talk.
5. Increase vocabulary by giving choices, e.g. "Do you want juice or milk?"
6. Talk about things as they happen, e.g. when you're both unpacking the shopping.
7. Listen carefully and give your child time to finish talking. Take turns to speak.
8. Always respond in some way when your child says something.
9. Help your child to use more words by adding to what they've said, e.g. if they said "ball" you might say, "Yes, a red ball."
10. 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?"
11. Try and have special time with your child each day to play with toys and picture books.
12. Limit TV time. Try to watch TV together so you can talk about what happens.



Talking to your baby matters. Here are some of the benefits.

Listening to your voice helps babies learn to use language.

1. It will stimulate your baby's brain, helping to strengthen the connections that make learning possible.
2. It will help your child become a good reader and writer, because language skills form the foundation for literacy.
3. It will help your child develop social skills and good relationships.
4. It will show that you love and respect your child, enhancing self-esteem.
5. It will help the two of you form a close bond communication is the basis of your relationship with each other.



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Originally created for Talk To Your Baby, drawn from:

The leaflet, *Help Your Child to Talk*, by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

How your baby learns to talk

From the minute she is born, your baby is already amazing, but she needs your help from her first day to fully develop her communication and social skills. Talking, singing, smiling and listening to your baby will help to develop her brain.

Babies are born with brains that have a huge capacity for learning and most brain development happens before the age of three. This is the crucial time to help your child learn to talk and communicate.

- He could hear and recognise your voice when he was in the womb, which is why he turns to look at you now. He feels comforted by your voice.
- Her first step is learning to distinguish sounds, such as being able to tell which voice belongs to her mother or father. She can do this in the first few minutes after birth.
- His babbles, smiles, gurgles and gestures are his first attempts at having a conversation with you. When you smile and respond it will help him on his way to becoming a talker.



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- By the time your baby is around two months old she will be cooing. By three months she will be focusing on you when you make eye contact and talk.
 - Between four and six months he will be babbling to you in response to your smiles, words and sounds, almost as if he is having a real conversation with you.
 - It doesn't sound like words yet because she is still learning how to use and control her lips and tongue. If you look carefully, you will see that her mouth movements are imitating yours. Try sticking out your tongue slowly, and see if she does the same.
- These clever moments may just feel like playing, but in fact they are important steps in your baby's language and brain development. This will help him to become happy and confident, as well as help his future learning.

So, take some time out to spend time talking, singing, laughing and communicating with your baby. Don't wait until she is at nursery, as that is leaving it too late. Starting early will help her get off to the best possible start in life

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Changing life stories

Nappy change and chat

Nappy times are communication times, so you can talk to your baby from the day they are born.

Nappy times can be the first time your baby will learn about taking turns in conversations. This helps develop a good foundation for communication later on.

Talk, listen and respond to your baby. They are looking at you and responsive to you. When they smile or cry, you respond, and when you smile they respond. So remember, for babies to develop a good foundation for communication, they need your H.E.L.P:

- **HAPPY:** Remember to be happy and make nappy times fun. Sing songs and rhymes, smile and give your child time to respond to you.
- **EXPRESSIVE:** Babies are active learners and learn through their senses at this time. Use facial expressions, be as expressive as you can and enjoy your time with your baby.
- **LOVING:** Nappy times are intimate times and babies need you to be loving and responsive, helping them to feel safe and secure. This will help to build their emotional and personal skills in the future, which are vital for their overall development.
- **PREPARE:** We know that nappies and babies are unpredictable, and they may need changing at any moment, anywhere! However, as far as possible, try to be prepared and organised, with everything you need easily accessible. This will allow you and your baby to have more time to communicate, sing songs, and have FUN!



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Playing and Talking

Play helps children learn about themselves and the world around them and is an important way to develop early communication and social skills. Regular play is a simple and easy way to benefit your baby, and for both of you to have fun together.

Babies are born to be sociable and love to interact. Play is a natural way of developing their communication and social skills. It is enjoyable for babies and adults and helps them to bond.

TIP As a parent, you are your baby's favourite playmate. Make time every day for regular play – in the bath, in the park or in the shops

A newborn baby will show her enjoyment of play by gurgling, smiling or kicking. Her facial expression will tell you just how much she is enjoying herself.

TIP Blow on her face, tickle her tummy, sing her a song, tell her a story and add some actions.

Toddlers will initiate play themselves, often returning to their favourite game over and over. The simplest toys can give the greatest pleasure, and they help develop imagination, creativity and confidence.

TIP Make time for unstructured play. Save safe household items, such as cardboard boxes, pasta or sand, for play items. Allow him to play freely and join in his games.

Play is great for language development as it helps children learn the names of people and objects in context. It also helps them learn to listen.



TIP Talk about people and objects. Speak slowly and repeat the names. Make sounds to go with what is happening, such as brmm, brmm for a car. Give her time to respond

During play, children learn to make choices and to express their preferences and needs. This builds their awareness of themselves, others and the world around them.

TIP Present her with simple choices. Hold up two cuddly toys, or leave a variety of materials for her to choose from.

By playing with your baby, you are showing him how interested you are in him. This helps build his self-esteem.

TIP Listen to what he tells you during play, and respond. Smile, praise and encourage him.

Toddlers love to play with adults and other children. Games are a great conversation starter and can help overcome shyness. By playing with others, children learn about turn-taking, sharing and social interaction.



TIP Encourage family members and friends to play too. Grandparents, siblings, cousins and babysitters all make great play mates.

Sometimes children like to play quietly by themselves. Too much time alone is not advisable, but it is important that children learn independence. She may enjoy some quiet time with a favourite toy or book.

TIP Give her time to herself if she wants it. Try to limit time spent in front of the TV. Keep her favourite toys close by.

When play is fun, learning happens naturally. The fewer rules, the better.

TIP Don't set learning goals. Allow some disorganisation and mess. Take your lead from him, and follow where he wants to go.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby

Communicate Through Music

When adults talk to a baby, they make music – they make their voices lilt up and down in a sing-song way, and find short phrases to say in a rhythmic way.

Hello baby! Aren't you beautiful?

Just imagine how you would say this to a baby and you will hear the music in it. Newborn babies are tuned in to this 'music' in adults' communication; not just their voices, but also the way they hold and move with their baby.

Newborn babies come into this world able to hear and with a sense of rhythm. They recognise their mother's heart beat and voice from when they are in the womb, and they quickly learn to make themselves heard through their coos, babbles, laughs and cries. They recognise sounds and enjoy making their own. From day one babies communicate and they enjoy using music to express themselves.



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Singing, rhymes, musical games and playing instruments are all great ways for parents and carers to communicate with babies. Musical activities make communication fun and enjoyable, and there is growing evidence that they assist with early language development and emotional wellbeing. Babies quickly learn to recognise the rhymes and enjoy the confidence they gain from knowing what comes next and being able to take an active part.

Some research links early exposure to, and knowledge of, songs, rhymes and rhythm with ease of learning to read and write and an ability to listen and respond. Music can play a key role in distracting, soothing and entertaining, too.

Musical activities can be used in the home and in early years settings, and on a one-to-one or group level. It doesn't require musical talent or skills; anyone can use music to communicate with young children.

Communicate through music activity pack

This activity pack was jointly developed by the National Literacy Trust and Music One2One as part of the Talk to Your Baby campaign. It was created to encourage musical interaction with babies and young children. It is designed for practitioners and professionals to help share the joys and the communication benefits of musical activities with parents and carers. It includes:

- The *Babies love music* A4 sheet, which promotes the benefits of music and could be printed out and used as a flyer to give to parents, or blown up to A3 size and displayed as a poster
- A fun survey to find out old and new favourite songs and rhymes, designed to get parents and carers thinking about musical activities
- One-to-one musical activities, for use in settings or to give to parents to use at home
- Group musical activities, to be carried out with children and families in settings
- An information sheet with useful contacts

The pack is designed to be a flexible resource for practitioners to integrate into their existing activities, or to introduce new musical activities to families and children. The materials can be photocopied and freely distributed.

Babies love music

Babies love music



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- Babies can hear before they are born – they recognise your voice and the beat of your heart
 - They love to hear a variety of music
 - Listen carefully as they try out new sounds themselves – watch, respond and join in
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- You don't need to be highly skilled – your voice is your baby's favourite music
 - Sing your favourite song, clap your baby's hands, and move together with the rhythm of the music
 - Have fun together exploring music and movement – this will help you and your baby get to know each other and enjoy communicating

Share your favourite songs and rhymes

Do you have a favourite nursery rhyme, song or tune from your childhood? What is it?

What do you associate the song with? A certain person, place or feeling?

What is your baby's favourite rhyme, song or tune?

How does she show her enjoyment of it?
Cooing, gurgling, smiling, kicking?



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Activities for you and your baby

- Turn off the TV and radio, sit your baby on your lap facing you and sing one of your favourite songs. It doesn't matter what song you sing; if you enjoy it, so will your baby. It could be the latest chart topper, a ballad, or a traditional nursery song. Don't worry if you don't think you sound great; your baby will love the sound of your voice.



Helps her to learn to listen and to learn about how one sound follows another – a skill that will help with reading and writing

- Include your baby's name in the song. Vary the tone of your voice. Give your baby time to respond. If he coos, wiggles or makes a face, watch and listen to him carefully to show just how interested you are by his response.



Your baby will feel valued and will learn about turn taking in conversation

- Sing the same songs over and over. Your baby will not get bored hearing them. Try to use rhyming words, and emphasise the rhymes.



She will begin to recognise words and to join in with familiar sequences

- Add movement to your words. Move with your baby to the beat and clap your hands or your baby's hands in time. Dance to the music – you can use a sling to dance together when he is very young.



He will learn about the pulse and rhythms of language

- Create sound effects. Use your hands to clap, your fingers to click and your mouth to make playful sounds and whistles. Fill plastic bottles with sand or beans and shake them.



She will be stimulated by the interesting and varied sounds

Activities for groups

- Create a treasure basket. Get a large box or basket and fill it with different musical instruments and sound makers. Anything that rattles, bangs or shakes is good. Small babies will enjoy high pitched sounds, such as the clinking of cutlery, bells or chimes. Sitting-up babies can make their own choices from the basket. Toddlers will enjoy making their own instruments, such as plastic bottles filled with beans or rice for shakers, or pots and wooden spoons for drums.



Young babies learn that they can make their own choices and can explore the relationship between movement and sound. They develop listening skills, learn to distinguish different sounds and develop their creativity and imagination

- Play musical games. Small babies will enjoy being gently bounced, rocked or patted in time to music. Toddlers will enjoy games such as musical statues or musical chairs. They will also enjoy dancing to the beat of the music.



Children will enjoy the interaction, learn about the rhythm of language and explore their senses

Have regular song and rhyme sessions. Sing familiar songs and rhymes, include the children's names and add actions to emphasise aspects of rhyme and pulse. Give babies time to coo or babble with pleasure, and encourage toddlers to join in.



Rhymes and songs help children recognise words, build their vocabulary and confidently socialise and express themselves

Use music to relax. Make sure the children are comfortable and put on a music CD for them to listen to. Try different styles of music to suit the mood – lively music at the start of play time or relaxing tunes at the end of the day.



Listening skills will be developed and children will enjoy the calming effect of music

Resources and information

Music One2One

This was a music education research project based at the University of Exeter School of Education and Life-Long Learning. Its primary aim was to raise the quality of caring for under two-year-olds by encouraging developmentally appropriate one-to-one, playful musical activity between carers and their babies and toddlers.

<http://education.exeter.ac.uk/music-one2one/downloads.php>

Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEPLE)

PEEP supports parents and carers in their role as children's first educators, and provides training and support for practitioners working with families. It publishes a range of song books and tapes for babies up to preschool.

<https://www.peeple.org.uk/>

Sound Connections – a music charity promoting good music making in the early years

<http://www.sound-connections.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012-06-EYFS-Framework-A-musical-overview.pdf>

A TACTYC paper on music and early years

<http://tactyc.org.uk/pdfs/Reflection-Fawcett.pdf>

Rough and Tumble Play of Infants and Toddlers

Rough and tumble play is one of many types of play that children will engage in as toddlers. Children who engage in rough and tumble play typically display acts involving running, climbing, chasing, play fighting, fleeing, wrestling, falling and open-handed slaps¹.

In infancy, physical touching, laughing, holding and a reflex grip are classified as rough and tumble play while in the toddler years, it involves climbing on furniture and people, tossing toddlers in the air, running, jumping, chasing, wrestling, crashing piles of blocks, lifting friends, kicking balls and throwing everything.

Rough and tumble play is a normal part of childhood and there are many benefits:

- Emotional - enjoyment, fun, love of life; release of energy, tension reduction; self-expression
- Social - cooperation, sharing, turn-taking, conflict resolution, leadership skill development, control of impulses and aggressive behaviour
- Educational - experimentation and risk taking, practice of skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, communication skills, attention regulation and persistence.

Research from Michelle Tannock and Nancy Sileo at the University of Nevada shows rough and tumble play occurs both indoors (38 per cent) and outdoors (62 per cent), is predominantly a peer form of play and varies between boys and girls (more boys engage in rough and tumble play than girls). It mimics intentionally aggressive actions and is more symbolic of aggression rather than being true aggression. Players do not intend to hurt partners.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby. This research was drawn from a presentation by Michelle Tannock and Nancy Sileo of the University of Nevada at the 2008 Zero to Three Conference.

¹ Hughes, F. P. (2003). Spontaneous play in the 21st century. *Contemporary perspectives on play in early childhood education*, 21-40.



Changing life stories

Rhyme Time

Babies love rhymes. Before birth, babies hear the rhythmic beat of their mother's heart. Shortly after birth they are conscious of different rhythms, including their own sucking rhythms as well as breathing and rocking. They seem ready to tune into rhythms of speech - in fact, babies seem to pay more attention to rhymes and be more responsive to them than to normal speech.

Why rhymes are so good for babies and toddlers

Your baby has your undivided attention and your face is close, so they can more easily 'read' and later imitate the sounds

- Your speech is softer, slower and higher-pitched than normal speech, which makes understanding easier and reflects your love for your child
- Most rhymes include some physical interaction, which adds fun and surprise and gives opportunities for smiles and laughter
- Your child will learn about turn-taking, listening and joining in - all essential skills for communicating
- Your child will become familiar with repeated rhymes and will take comfort from them
- Singing or reciting rhymes with your child helps them to recognise words and sounds

And rhymes are also good for adults!

- Some adults find it difficult to talk to babies. Using a rhyme can be an effective way of starting communication and sustaining interaction, as the baby is likely to respond enthusiastically and want more
- Rhymes provide ideal one-to-one bonding situations
- Rhymes can soothe your baby
- No equipment is needed

Time for rhymes

- Make sure your baby is 'in the mood' before you begin. Your baby or toddler should be looking at you.
- Introduce and accompany the rhymes with a running commentary, such as "Listen to me. Time to stop now. Well done."
- Give lots of praise when your child joins in. Children like an audience!
- Add fun by the way you use your voice. Pause to add suspense.
- Begin with familiar rhymes, which comfort your child, and work towards new ones.

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- Turn off the TV and radio so your voice can be clearly heard.
- Personalise rhymes by adding your child's name where possible.
- Make it fun! The more engaged your child is, the more likely it is that he will acquire words.

Recommended nursery rhymes

Birth to 2 years of age

- This little piggy
- Hush a bye baby
- One-two buckle my shoe
- Pat-a-cake
- What can the matter be?

2 to 3 years of age

- Old McDonald
- London Bridge
- Eency weency spider
- Here we go round the mulberry bush
- The wheels on the bus
- Row, row, row your boat

Useful resources

There are lots of words to rhymes and songs to download for free:

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/songs>

<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug/bookbug-resources/song-rhyme-ideas>

YouTube and apps are another useful source if you can't remember the tunes!

Originally created for Talk to Your baby drawing on "Rhyme Time", written by Opal Dunn for *Nursery World*, 6 May 2004. Updated in 2017.



Changing life stories

Activities for good manners

Communication is an important element in helping your child to grow up to be kind, caring, polite and respectful. Here are some tips for how to talk to your child to help them develop good manners.

Teach them early

How early? Try infancy! From the beginning, communicate with your baby by a soft word and a gentle touch. When your nine-month-old grabs a handful of your hair and pulls hard, don't yell. Unfurl her fist and tell her to 'be gentle'. She learns to be gentle from your example long before she understands the word.

Modelling manners

Between the ages of two and four, what children hear, they say. Let your child hear you say 'please', 'thank you', 'excuse me' and 'you're welcome' often. Though they don't yet understand the meaning of polite words, toddlers conclude that 'please' is how you ask for things and 'thank you' is how you end an interaction. Plant these social niceties into their vocabulary early so they become a part of their developing speech.

Address by name

Use the name of your child when requesting something from them, such as: 'Harry, will you please help me with the dishes?' Your children pick up on this and address you by: 'Mum, may I...?' or 'Dad, would you...?' Even though they might not always get what they want, you can let them know you appreciate their politeness.

Teach respect

Some parents teach their children to address adults as Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss. Some address their parents' friends by their first names while others use 'aunt' or 'uncle'. Whatever is done in your family, teach your child what is expected of her in different situations. When you don't know a person's name, use 'excuse me'. And if the person has a title, such as doctor or reverend, use it. Respectful listening is another skill that's important. Remind your child not to interrupt and to wait for an appropriate time to add their comments.

When your child approaches you to talk, turn away from what you're doing, look at them and listen with interest. Showing your child respect will help them learn respect for others.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby, with research drawn from Dr. William Sears.

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Hey dads – we are talking to you

This resource is designed to help family professionals encourage fathers¹ to communicate more with their young children. Research shows that dads play a crucial role in young children’s development - and that the early years are particularly important for creating a father-child bond and developing a child’s communication skills.

When two parents (or grandparents) engage, children tend to do better. For example, when dads are trained in infant communication, babies’ intellectual development is greater than when only mums are trained.

Children whose fathers are highly involved in their upbringing from their earliest years are more likely to succeed academically, be more stable emotionally, and are less likely to become involved in crime and other anti-social behaviours. Today’s dads spend much more time with their young children than fathers did 30 years ago. *The State of the Modern Family* report reveals that fathers whose babies were born during 2000 were heavily involved with them at age three: half read to them daily and over three-quarters played with them daily².



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This pack includes a range of resources to help get dads involved and communicating with their babies and toddlers.

It contains:

- Making it happen – getting dads involved
- Activities/Ideas
- Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz
- Dads – Talk To Your Baby (leaflet)
- Further resources

Like mothers, fathers’ needs vary, depending on background, personality and circumstances. Some dads take to infant care and communication like ducks to water; others find it a challenge. Some work long hours, or live in other households, or think mothers’ input matters most. Others are very available and are clear about their own importance. Few like to think they need ‘support’. And fathers of all kinds, and from any background, are most likely to become ‘hands on’ when they come to understand how this will **benefit their children.**

¹ By ‘fathers’ or ‘dads’ we mean men who play the fathering role within a family

² The State of the Modern Family, EOC, March 2007

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Making it happen – getting dads involved

It is vital to reach out deliberately to fathers and give them ownership and a sense of belonging to the early years community, as it may not be an environment to which they feel they belong. Here are a few simple ways to make your early years setting more inviting to fathers and male carers, and to draw the men in.



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- Do you KNOW the dads? Think carefully about your registration forms: is there a place for the father's name and contact details?
 - In setting up your first meeting with the parents stress how important it is that fathers attend. Offer home visits out of hours if that's the only way to meet them.
 - Make sure to address your remarks to both parents – and encourage both to ask questions. Also address fathers directly on material sent to parents – use 'mums, dads and carers' instead of 'parents/carers'.
 - If dads come to drop off or collect their baby/toddler, invite them into the building and welcome them. Talk with them and their child about the day. If dads can't come to meet you then send material home especially for them.
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- Invite fathers to specific events where you can model talking and communicating with the babies and toddlers. If possible, think about holding this at the weekend when more fathers and working mothers might be able to attend.
 - Make sure ALL staff are on board with engaging fathers.
 - Display a range of pictures of men with babies/toddlers in the early years setting – not in a 'dads' corner' but integrated with other images; and make sure 'boys' toys' have their place.
 - It is important to vocalise to mothers as well as fathers and other service users how important fathers are. Be positive about their role in communicating with their baby. Emphasise how good it is for children to hear a male voice that is different from their mother. Babies are sociable and love to communicate, so encourage dads to understand that by talking to their babies they are creating a bond, whilst also helping their child's language development AND helping their brains develop.
 - Ask fathers what they would like to see from their early years settings, or how they could be made to feel more involved.
 - If dads do not live with their baby or young child, gather their details, make serious efforts to meet them, send information routinely to them - and be supportive and encouraging about the importance of playing and talking with their baby when they spend time together.

Activities/Ideas

Below are a few suggestions to help dads and male carers understand how important it is that they communicate directly even with very young babies. Modelling this is extremely powerful and a great learning tool for parents, so remember to include this in all your activities.



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- Hold a specific event to ‘honour’ fathers (perhaps around fathers’ day) or ‘themed’ in a way that might appeal to a lot of dads (how about a ‘sailing day’ in the nursery, or jungle exploration?) Make it a breakfast, an evening or a weekend event. ‘Dads only’ events can be tried, but don’t be surprised if fewer dads show up. Many prefer ‘family’ events which mums can attend, too.
- Once dad feels ‘at home’ in the nursery, invite him in for a specific activity (a singing session may NOT be the place to start! – a ‘making things’ session is likely to be less threatening). Use themes that are likely to appeal to dads. Making a dad and baby hand or footprint with paints to take home could follow on from a session where dads get time to play and bond with their child. Highlight that all these activities are helping introduce new vocabulary, encourage social interaction and learn turn-taking – and develop the child’s IQ. When fathers understand that these activities are helping them ‘raise a clever kid’ you’re on to a winner.
- Look around for books with positive fathers and father-figures, and send these home for dad to read with their child (when you see him next time, you can ask him how it went).
- Hold a story-telling session, inviting dads and male carers to attend, to hear a story with their child. Think carefully about the choice of story, making sure that it is something that might appeal to all involved (see further resources for suggestions). Invite dads to bring in their own favourite book that they might read with their baby/toddler and that they are happy to talk about with others. If possible, link this in with a visit to the local library, or see if a member of the library staff who looks after early years is available to come and join you.
- Consider holding an event outdoors – perhaps a picnic, bringing together the local community, to which dads are specifically invited. Encourage babies and toddlers to be out of buggies as much as possible, helping fathers bond with close contact. Structured activities such as a nature trail, or watching what goes on in the park, or feeding the ducks, encourages conversation naturally between babies and fathers. This will help emphasise how babies learn through stimulation and engagement.

Running REGULAR activities at specific times on fixed days that fathers are encouraged to attend, can gradually build attendance. However, very few fathers will ever attend a ‘fathers only’ group. EXPECTING regular attendance can turn them off - especially at the beginning.

Communicating Dad resources

- Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz
- Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz answers
- Dads – Talk To Your Baby (leaflet)

The Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz is a useful way of engaging fathers as well as mothers in the issue of communication. It helps to introduce the facts of the topic and challenges participants to think about what they already know. The quiz could be used with dads and male carers, perhaps as an introductory session. It can be done competitively, in teams or individually. Try using it before giving out any information or facts on communication to have maximum impact.



Dads – Talk To Your Baby and Young Child (leaflet) can be given out at an event, used as a follow-on from the quiz or sent home as a handout. It has been designed specifically with a male audience in mind, and for all ages.

© Posy Simmonds

Test your knowledge – Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz

1. When should you start talking to babies?

- a) From the moment they are born
- b) After six weeks
- c) When they smile at you

ANSWER

2. Babies can hear your voice before they are born. True or false

ANSWER

3. When does the majority of brain development occur in children?

- a) In the first four weeks
- b) From birth to age two
- c) When they start school

ANSWER

4. When do babies start to communicate?

- a) Before they start talking
- b) After they start talking
- c) As soon as they've said their first word

ANSWER

5. You need to be an expert to help children develop good communication skills. True or false?

ANSWER

6. What percentage of brain development occurs in the first two years?

- a) 75%
- b) 25%
- c) 55%

ANSWER

7. If a young child says something incorrectly, what should you do?

- a) Nod in agreement
- b) Say it back the right way
- c) Write down the correct word

ANSWER

8. Is it ok for young children to watch television?

- a) Never
- b) As often as they like
- c) For limited periods

ANSWER

9. Watching different programmes is more beneficial than watching the same programme/dvd repetitively. True or false

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10. When should you talk to children?

- a) At a set time each day
- b) At any time
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ANSWER

11. It is important to listen to babies and to respond to them when they speak, babble or smile at you. True or false?

ANSWER

12. Why is responding to babies good for them?

- a) It motivates them to keep talking
- b) It is good manners
- c) It develops their listening

ANSWER

13. Why is talking to babies good for them?

- a) It stops them from crying
- b) It distracts them
- c) It helps develop their communication and social skills

ANSWER

Test Your Knowledge – Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz Answer Sheet

1. a
2. True
3. b
4. a
5. False
6. a
7. b
8. c
9. False
10. b
11. True
12. a, b and c
13. c

Dads - talk to your baby

The facts:

- Gazing directly into your baby's eyes, talking to him and waiting for his responses, stimulates your baby's brain, helping to strengthen the connections that make learning possible.
- This also helps him learn to talk, as it is from listening to your voice that he will learn to use language.
- Good speaking and listening skills help him to become a good reader and writer, because language skills form the foundation for literacy.
- Communicating, talking and interaction helps develop social skills and good relationships.
- This will show that you love and respect him, enhancing self-esteem.
- Spending time talking with him will help the two of you form a close bond - communication is the basis of your relationship with each other.
- Most brain development occurs from birth to age two, so babies and toddlers need stimulation as much as they need nourishing food. The best way to stimulate babies' brains is to connect with them through 'mutual gaze' and talk to them from the moment they are born.

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.

The chat:

- Whilst out, talk about the things you see when you're on the bus, in the car or walking to the shops.
- In the evenings chat to her during bath time, or sing to her (it doesn't have to be a nursery rhyme!) while changing her nappy.
- The supermarket is a good place to talk to her and introduce new words, as she is sitting in the trolley facing you. Gain her attention and then describe some of the items as you put them in the trolley.
 - Try not to ask her too many questions. Instead, tell her about things, especially the things she shows an interest in, like a favourite toy.
 - Talk with her when she is watching TV programmes, about what you see and what's happening.



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Originally created for Talk to Your Baby. Drawn from research from The Fatherhood Institute, a UK fatherhood think tank whose vision is to give all children a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures.

Dads – Talk to Your Baby

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Changing life stories

Toy suggestions by age group

Children just love to play and the great news is that play is good for them. From four months old a baby will smile and giggle when you make funny sounds or cuddle them up close. By eight months they've grasped the 'where's it gone?' theory and are delighted by peek-a-boo games.

Remember that Children's Centres often have toy libraries where you can borrow toys for free to play with at home.

Early days

Dr Julie C Coultas, a social psychologist at East Sussex University, says playing has an essential role in children's mental and physical development and as such says parents should see their role in helping babies and children play as 'parental investment'. She explains that before 15 months the games should be led by the mother or carer with little peer interaction.

The National Literacy Trust believe that what babies and young children learn from playing, equips them with valuable skills later on, and that it's never too early to start. "Babies are born social and need an adult partner to develop their social skills. Playing involves being engaged in an enjoyable activity and you can begin playing with your baby as soon as she is conceived. Your baby will already be familiar with your voice if you talk to your bump while you're pregnant, and you can start interacting now, when you feel the baby kick, gently tap back to see if you get a response."

Development skills

Child development falls into the two main categories of physical and neurological. Physical skills involve both gross motor skills such as rolling over, crawling and walking, and fine motor skills such as hand-eye coordination, grasping objects, drawing and later writing.

Sensory development is also physical and includes sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. Intellectual and cognitive development centre on activity in the brain including use of language, smiling and giggling, imagination and working out. Our children's emotional wellbeing also develops in the brain and comprises many areas such as self-awareness, self-esteem and the ability to interact with others. Playing in some form or another helps to refine these different areas of development in babies and young children.

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Communication

Good communication makes for good and rewarding play, although in young children under two years this doesn't necessarily mean having to speak with words. Facial expressions of surprise, pleasure, not knowing where something is and praise will all help your child find enjoyment in play. Talking to your toddler in simple language helps them learn to give their feelings expression. Use single words such as 'Happy', 'Gone', 'Oh no' right from the beginning.

How to help

Young children usually have short attention spans which adults can find frustrating. You can create a more beneficial atmosphere that encourages your little one to 'stay with it', by avoiding distractions such as the television or other people.

If you lack confidence in how to play, start with a board book for a baby of around 6 months that you can look at together. Ask your son or daughter if they can see certain pictures and see if they can point to them. You show them how, then let them try. Try covering things up with your hand to see if they can remember what's there. As they get older you'll notice how more perceptive they become. Simple games that have a clear cause and effect are good to begin with.

As they grow

Psychologists agree that babies learn much through watching other babies and imitating their parents. According to Dr. Coultas, from **around 15 months** a child is able to imitate, watch and comply with his mother's suggestions, which means time to offer up plenty of ideas.

Toddlers don't actually play together properly until **about 21 months** when they begin to learn independence. You can now take on the more passive role of spectator. Pretend tea parties are a favourite at about this age.

At **about 25-30 months** your child will be able to develop a story with his friends. They love to mimic scenes from home, playgroup and television.

From around three years of age children create pretend worlds together and enjoy adding in greater detail as they get older. All this leads to the important social skill of the 'theory of mind', which simply means that they have now learnt that what they think isn't always what others will think, and they are able to put themselves in someone else's shoes.

Age appropriate toys and games

0-3 months: Wind chimes, unbreakable mirrors (babies tend to look right 80% of the time so make sure you put any objects in their line of vision), high contrasting mobiles, cloth books

3-6 months: Baby play gyms, rattles, squeaky rubber toys, colourful teethers, socks with bells

6-9 months: Textured books, soft blocks to knock down, activity boards, toys that pop up when your baby pushes the button, balls - throw the ball and encourage your baby to crawl after it

9-12 months: Walker, rocker, toy, telephone, shape sorter, books with flaps, bucket and spade for natural sand play - your baby will love the texture

12-18 months: Simple puzzles such as cut-out circles and squares, stacking, pull toys for confident walkers; climbing frame, washable non-toxic crayons, ride-on vehicle, toy buggy

18-24 months: Musical instruments such as keyboards, drum, plastic tea set, play house or den (throw a blanket on the old baby gym), shopping trolley, gardening tools, building blocks

24-36 months: Illustrated books, dressing-up clothes, child-size household equipment, construction toys, eg Lego, wooden puzzles, dolls to undress

36 months +: Basic jigsaw puzzles, memory games such as snap, child-size pots and pans, plasticine, bats and balls, golf sets, reference books

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby

Quiz - Talk to your baby and young child

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- c) When they smile at you

ANSWER

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The Talk to Your Baby and Young Child Quiz Answer Sheet

1. a
2. True
3. b
4. a
5. False
6. a
7. b
8. c
9. False
10. b
11. True
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13. c

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby.



Changing life stories

STORY GAME

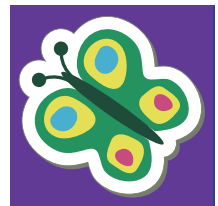
This story game provides a fun way for children to explore **Giraffes Can't Dance by Giles Andreae and illustrated by Guy Parker-Rees**. In order to play children need to be familiar with the book and have heard the story a few times.

Before you play

Everything you need to create the game is included in this pack. Print out the templates for the **game board**, **bingo board**, **question** and **bingo cards**, **spinning dice** and **counters**. Once you have cut these out, you are ready to play.

How to play

1. Place the game board in the middle of the group of players along with a pile of question cards and a pile of bingo cards.
2. Each player needs a bingo board and a counter.
3. Players take turns to spin the dice and move around the game board.
4. When a player lands on a space square, he or she picks up a question card. If the player answers correctly, he or she takes a bingo card and places it on their bingo board. If the player answers incorrectly, he or she does not receive a bingo card and play moves on to the next player.
5. When a player lands on a 'free bingo card' space then he or she can take a bingo card without answering a question.
6. The first player to complete their bingo board and shout out 'bingo' is the winner.



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START

question cards

STORY GAME

Bingo cards

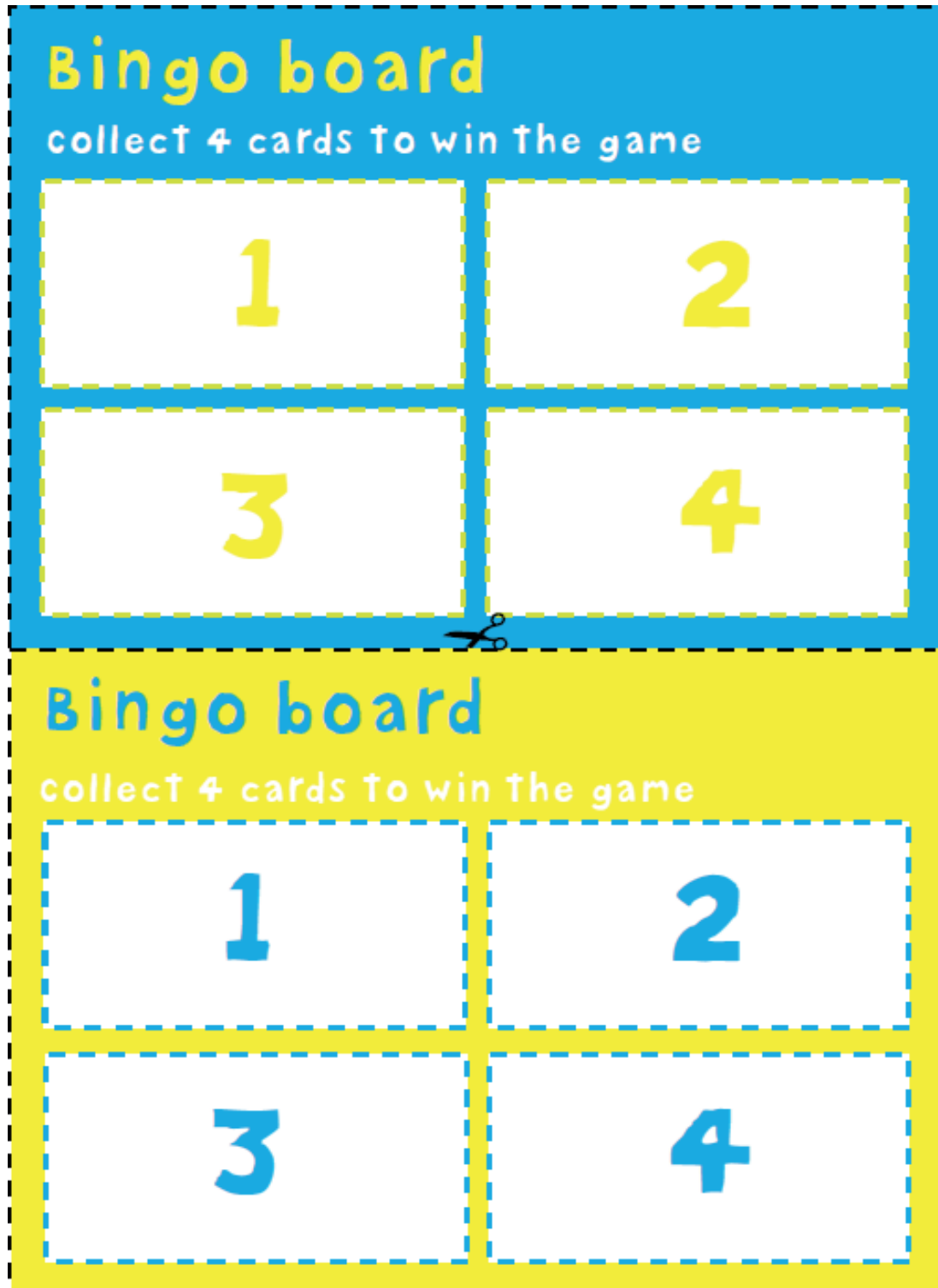
Free bingo card

Free bingo card

Free bingo card

Bingo boards

Each player needs their own bingo board.



Bingo Cards

Cut out the bingo cards, and place in the centre of the game board. Print out as many sheets as you need.



Question Cards - Sheet 1

Print and laminate the cards, then place them in the centre of the game board.

 Q Where does Gerald live?	Q What does Gerald like to eat?
Q What colours are on Gerald?	Q Does Gerald have stripes or spots?
Q Which animals started waltzing?	Q What kind of dance do the rhinos do?
Q What colour flower do the lions have in their mouth as they dance?	Q Who did a cha-cha, with a very latin feel? 
Q How many baboons teamed up for a splendid Scottish reel?	Q How do you think Gerald feels when he is being teased about not being able to dance?

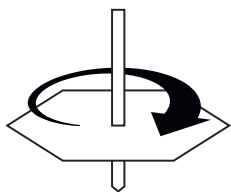
Question Cards - Sheet 2

Print and laminate the cards, then place them in the centre of the game board.

<p>Q As Gerald creeps off from the dancefloor, how many animals are dancing in a line?</p>	<p>Q What kind of animal talks to Gerald when he felt sad and so alone?</p>
<p>Q What is your favourite part of the story?</p>	<p>Q What creatures sit on the leaf over the cricket as he plays his music?</p>
<p>Q What kind of instrument does the cricket play?</p>	<p>Q What colour are the three beetles that listen below the cricket?</p>
<p>Q What kind of somersault does Gerald do?</p>	<p>Q What are the animals throwing at Gerald when he finishes his dance with a bow?</p>
<p>Q How many different creatures can you spot looking at the moon?</p>	<p>Q When we find music that we love, what can we all do?</p>

Print and cut out the spinning dice and counters below.
Alternatively, use dice and counters you already have in your setting.

Spinning dice



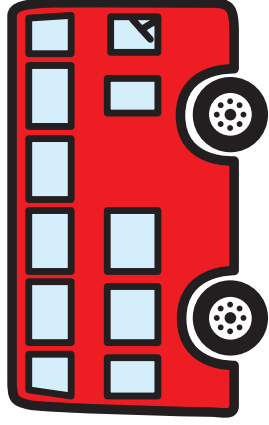
Counters



The wheels on the bus



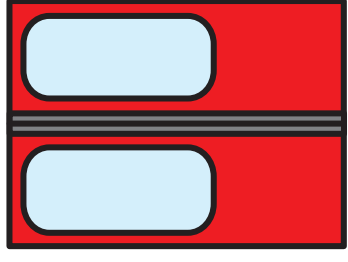
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wheels



mummies

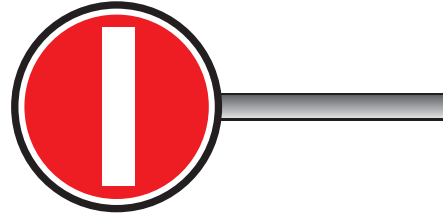


doors

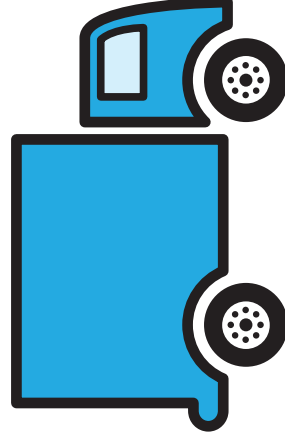
What can you see?



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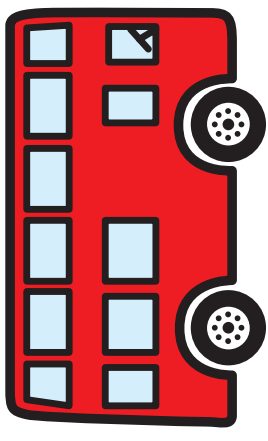
sign



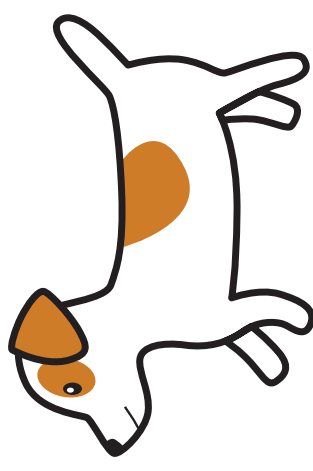
lorry



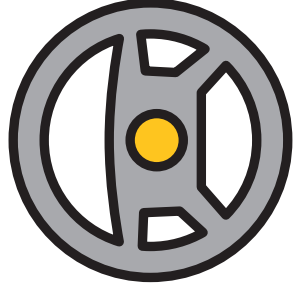
bird



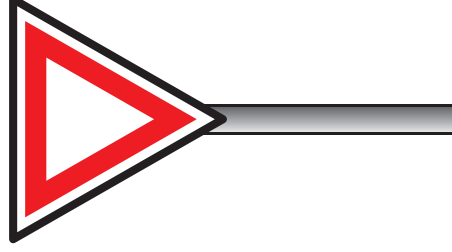
wheels



dog



horn



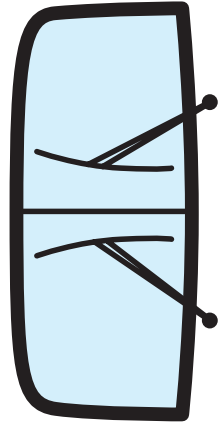
sign



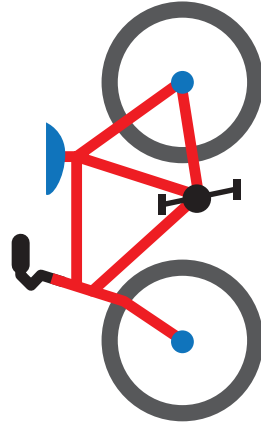
children



sun



wipers



bike

Talking zig-zags

Guidance notes – how to make the most of your zig-zags

The talking zig-zags have been designed to help promote communication and discussion with children. This resource will allow you to make two talking zig-zags. One is based on the song “The Wheels on the Bus”, and the other encourages children to look around them and talk about what they can see when they are out and about.

Start by following these simple instructions:

1. Print out the resource (you may need to check your printer settings to ensure the panels are of equal size).
2. Cut along the dotted line to separate the two talking zig-zags and then fold each one three times, along the black lines.
3. If you would like to attach the talking zig-zags to a buggy or car seat, use a hole-punch or scissors to make a hole in the top left-hand corner of each one. Use string or something similar to tie them on.
4. To make your talking zig-zags last longer glue them onto stiff card.

This resource can be used in a number of ways:

- Attach one or both talking zig-zags to a buggy frame. When you are out and about with a child sing “The Wheels on the Bus” with them or talk to them about what they can see.
- Once children are used to looking out for objects extend the activity by asking them to find certain colours and shapes. For example “Can you spot something that is blue?” or “Can you see a triangle anywhere?”
- This resource includes simple images with clean lines. Ask children to trace along the lines with their fingers. Practising these fine motor skills will help them when they start mark-making.
- Childminders often need to entertain younger children in the car when they’re on the school run to collect older children. Attach one or both of the talking zig-zags to car seats to give children something to do while they are waiting in the car.
- Some children like to dawdle as they go from place to place! Use this resource to encourage children along the pavement towards your destination. Ask them to keep walking to find the next dog or to stand next to the street sign further along the pavement.
- If you are an early years practitioner why not print some out to give to parents and carers? Once you have explained how they can be used, parents and carers may be keen to attach the talking zig-zags to their own buggy or car seat.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby, with help from Lucy Giffen, a Childminder from Croydon.

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Changing life stories

Help families start reading

Reading and talking activities for nurseries and practitioners

Ideas for group activities that encourage talking through book-sharing

Baby's favourite book

Get parents and carers involved by asking them to vote for the book or story that their child enjoys listening to the most. Ask them to say why they have chosen the story – because their baby always smiles when they hear it, or makes lots of happy noises. This will get them thinking about their babies' reactions and the communication process surrounding reading. When all the votes are in, you could make a display of the top five books and why they were chosen, and hold a reading together session for parents and children.

Book-making

Hold a book-making event. Invite parents and carers to bring in photographs and create a book that they think their baby will enjoy. It might be about the parent growing up, about their favourite food, other family members or a holiday. The objective is to get them thinking about the words, sounds and images that they love to talk about and their baby will enjoy. This will create a book that will get the most response when read out loud.

Book parties

Organise a book party for parents and carers to attend with their babies and young children. It could be a themed event, such as a pyjama party where children come dressed for a nap and you read bedtime stories, or a nursery rhyme session where you read out traditional nursery rhymes and everyone joins in. Or an event based on a character from a children's book or about animals or the sea using books that have stories about those themes.

Read out loud and use the event to help carers see how their children react and communicate during the session. You could think about teaming up with your local library, which may run regular rhymetime or storytime sessions. Encourage parents to join the library and attend future sessions.

Puppet shows

Invite parents and carers to bring their babies and young children to a puppet show. Base the show around a popular children's book and act out the story. Have a display of the book and similar stories for parents to look at afterwards, to create a point of discussion about reading aloud and communicating.

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Resources and information

Resources for practitioners and professionals

Bookstart

Bookstart is a national scheme in England that delivers free books to young children. Bookstart is for babies aged 0-12 months, Bookstart + is for toddlers aged 18-30 months, and My Bookstart Treasure Chest is for children aged 34-48 months.

www.bookstart.org.uk

Booktrust

Booktrust has a website dedicated to children's books, including recommended book lists and information and resources for National Children's Book Week, which takes place in October.

www.booktrust.org.uk

Scottish Book Trust

Scottish Book Trust encourages parents to share the benefits of reading, singing and playing with your baby, toddler or child through **Bookbug** through gifting books and running sessions in libraries and schools. .

<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug>

Local library

Many libraries run rhymetime and storytime sessions and all have a children's section. Your local council will have details of your nearest library.

National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust website has an early years section that includes a wide range of information on early reading and literacy development.

www.literacytrust.org.uk

Words for Life

The Words for Life website has lots of parental advice, tips and games for use to support early reading.

<http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/>

This guide was originally created by the National Literacy Trust's Talk to Your Baby campaign with Bookstart.



Changing life stories

How practitioners can encourage talk

All parents wish to do their best for their children, but sometimes they lack the confidence or knowledge to implement powerful parenting practices, such as attentive listening, singing songs, playing rhyming games and sharing books. They may not know how important (and easy) this is.

Below are three ways early years practitioners can help parents and carers understand the value and pleasure gained from talking to their young child.

Modelling

Practitioners should take every opportunity to model effective communication techniques to use with children, such as using eye-contact, listening carefully and allowing time for the child to respond. Show parents how allowing 15-30 seconds for a child to respond to a question can help the child respond.

Practitioners can talk with children in front of their parents, during drop-off or pick-up times, for example. This can often be enough to get parents involved in trying things for themselves.

Holding a parents' evening or running a parenting course

Another way to inform parents and carers of the importance of early communication is to hold a parents' evening or course.

How can you attract parents to these sessions? One way is to start by offering parents something they want to know, and building from there. A UK study involving parents of children under five found that the most prominent information need was child health information (91%), followed by information about child care (86%) and child development (80%) (Nicholas and Marden, 1998). A US study of parents' preferences regarding parenting education found that when asked to rate 15 parenting topics, 95% of respondents indicated most interest in "building your child's self-esteem" (Jacobson and Engelbrecht, 2000). Any session on building children's confidence will lead naturally to early communication, as the ability to communicate is the basis of social and emotional well-being.

Practitioners could begin by hosting a session for parents on matters they are concerned about, like crying. Then invite parents to come for a longer session based on home learning environment activities. Sure Start speech and language therapists often use baby massage to attract parents and then introduce a few songs and tips on talking and bonding once everyone is relaxed.

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Practitioners might also consider running a course on something of greater interest to parents and children such as drama or music classes. Research has shown that parents with low levels of confidence, or with the greatest learning needs, are more likely to take part in practical activities that do not involve any reading or writing, such as drama, crafts, music or gardening projects. And any activity that involves parents and children doing things together is a great way to help develop talking skills, and an excellent opportunity for practitioners to model good communication.

Fathers are more likely to get involved in parenting courses or activities if there is a clear strategy to involve and consult them. Dads also enjoy being taught how to share books and tell stories. Holding events like sport or outdoor games, can help to get dads along too.

Send a newsletter

Sending out a newsletter with suggested "talking points" based on a current theme, or sending home information leaflets with tips to help children's talking and listening skills, will also help parents think about the issue. The National Literacy Trust has produced a series of quick tips for parents and practitioners, which have been translated into 17 languages. Topics include dummies, songs and rhymes, play, sharing books, television, talking together, bilingualism and the social newborn. The tips can be downloaded from our website and photocopied free of charge.

The National Literacy Trust has several programmes to help you engage parents – have a look at Early Words Together on the charity's website.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby with research drawn from Netherley Valley Sure Start.



Changing life stories

How to make story boxes

A story box is a miniature setting, a shoe box-sized stage with a background and objects within it relating to either to a specific book, or to a common story scenario.

Story boxes are a great resource to support children's exploration of stories. They form areas in which to retell a favourite story, as well as creative arenas for children to make up new stories – both encouraging talk, imagination and literacy skills.

You can make these in nurseries or at home!

Ideas – An arctic story box

Stick cotton wool inside the box to create a snowy setting and use glitter and PVA glue to make an icy pool. Then add some arctic animals and an igloo if you can find one.

How to make a story box

1. Find a shoe box (or similar). A shoe box is ideal – once your story box is made the lid can be used to store the box securely when it's not in use.
2. Cut down two of the vertical edges on a long side to create a flap to open the box. This is how the children can see into the box, and reach in to move items around as they're telling the story.
3. Decide on your theme – you might like to make one story box for a common story setting (such as a forest, north pole or castle) and a second to use with a particular story, perhaps following children's interests in picking a current favourite.
4. Cover the inside of the box in materials, such as tissue paper or felt to recreate the setting of your choice.
5. Collect objects for the inside of the box which would be found in the setting, such as small people and other characters, items of furniture or buildings, and small and full-size objects found in the setting.

Ideas

In The Night Garden story box

Depending on the size of your box you could include the gazebo, the stepping stone path, the Tombliboo bush and washing line or Makka Pakka's cave, as well as the children's favourite characters.

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How to use a story box

- Start off by showing the how to use the box. Once children have got used to them, they will be able to use them independently.
- Children will enjoy making up their own stories, naming the characters and leading them through the setting, meeting various objects on the way.
- Older children may enjoy retelling the story themselves using the box as a stage.
- Use the box to learn more about children's interests. They may provide you with inspiration for future learning and future book choices.

Ideas

A birthday story box

Cover the inside of the box in birthday wrapping paper and put party hats, presents, cake and a birthday card inside as well as some small people.

Nurseries sharing story boxes with parents

- If you are a nursery, story boxes are another resource that can be lent out to parents to use at home.
- Before you send story boxes home, make sure you invite parents in to show them how the story box is used.
- Encourage them to use it to retell stories, and allow their children to use it to make up their own.
- Encourage parents to let you know how it went – what did they notice about the kind of stories their child is interested in?

Ideas

A castle story box

Paint the box grey and fill it with a knight, a princess, a dragon, some castle furniture and a tower made out of a kitchen roll that children can erect when the box is open.



Story Sacks

A story sack is a large cloth bag containing a favourite children's book with supporting materials to stimulate language activities and make reading a memorable and enjoyable experience.

This guide contains instructions on how to make and use story sacks, as well as step by step instructions to make two story sacks based on *The Three Little Pigs* and *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*.

How to make a story sack

After finding the large cloth bag to make the sack itself, include any of the following materials, as appropriate for the needs and abilities of the children within your setting

- A copy of the story book
- A big book version of the story
- A CD or DVD of the story
- Related non-fiction books
- Models of characters and objects from the story
- Activities or games relating to the story
- Paper and crayons
- Plasticine
- Activity card (see below)

Include an activity card

An activity card lists ideas for how to use the sack helping parents and new staff in using the resource.

- Talk about the story and children's favourite bits
- Ask children questions about the characters and the plot
- Retell the story using the models
- Find out more about the people and places in the story by looking at the non-fiction books
- Draw a character or model one out of plasticine
- Draw a story map of the plot to help with re-telling the story



How to use a story sack

Start off by working closely with the children to model story sack activities. Once children have got used to the sacks, they will be able to use them independently.

Invite parents to see you model the use of the story sacks, before offering parents the opportunity to borrow them to use at home.

A story sack based on *The Three Little Pigs*

Include the following in your story sack

- Copy of 'The three little pigs', of which there are a number of versions
- Models of the three pigs and the wolf
- Some straw, some twigs and some stone or pebbles
- Non-fiction book about buildings
- Fireman's prop e.g. hose or hat
- Paper and crayons
- Activity card – see below

An activity card for *The Three Little Pigs* story sack

General activities (for all story sacks)

- Talk about the story and children's favourite bits
- Ask children questions about the characters and the plot
- Retell the story using the models
- Find out more about the people and places in the story by looking at the non-fiction books
- Draw a character or model one out of plasticine
- Draw a story map of the plot to help with re-telling the story

Activities for *The Three Little Pigs*

- Ask the children to have a go at blowing the straw, twigs and stone across the floor and discover which moved most easily
- Using the wolf model as a prop, children can tell the wolf off and give him some tips for making friends
- Talk about the dangers of fires and ask children what they would do in a fire
- Children can draw their own house or a house that they would like build using the paper and crayons

Questions to ask about *The Three Little Pigs*

You may not have the time or space for an activity, in this case just take a couple of things out of the sack and spend a few minutes talking about the story.

- Where did the three pigs live before they built their own houses?
- What do you like doing in your house or flat?
- Who could the pigs talk to about the wolf bullying them?
- Would you like to be a builder then you grow up? Why? Why not?



A story sack based on *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*

With thanks to Walker Books Ltd, London SE11 5HJ

Include the following in your story sack

- Copy of the book *We're Going On A Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury
- Figurines of the family
- Map of the family's bear hunt
- Non-fiction book about bears
- Musical instruments e.g. small shaker and drum
- Plasticine
- Activity card – see below

An activity card for the *We're Going On A Bear Hunt* story sack

General activities (for all story sacks)

- Talk about the story and children's favourite bits
- Ask children questions about the characters and the plot
- Retell the story using the models
- Find out more about the people and places in the story by looking at the non-fiction books
- Draw a character or model one out of plasticine
- Draw a story map of the plot to help with re-telling the story

Activities for *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*

- Retell the story using the map of the family's bear hunt to remind you and the children what comes next
- Using the instruments ask children to recreate the sounds that they family were making or that the family heard on the hunt.
- Learn about bears using the non-fiction book. Are they all big and scary? Do bears live nearby?
- Ask children to make a model of their favourite character or place in the book using the plasticine

Questions to ask about *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*

You may not have the time or space for an activity, in this case just take a couple of things out of the sack and spend a few minutes talking about the story.

- Who would you take with you on a bear hunt? Why?
- What would you take with you on a bear hunt? Why?
- Who helps you when you feel scared?
- Would you rather be chased by a bear or a dragon? Why?

For more practical ideas, resources and more see our website at www.literacytrust.org.uk/early



Changing life stories

How to share books and talk together

Babies love to communicate. They are born sociable and come into the world with a willingness to communicate and learn. Their experiences in their early years shape their future social, communication and learning skills.

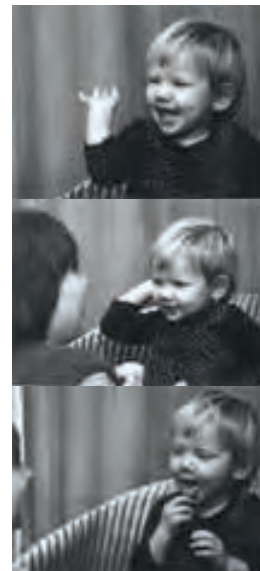
Books can be a great way to help babies during this period of discovery.

Seventy-five per cent of brain development occurs in the first two years of life and babies need stimulation and attention to make the most of this opportunity. This is not as daunting as it may first sound as stimulation comes from simple, everyday activities such as talking, listening, singing and sharing books together.

A language-rich home helps a child to develop in many ways. Talking and reading to babies helps them learn to listen, and gives them the chance to respond and be listened to. Over time, their coos, babbles and smiles will move on to words and sentences. Engaging with them, and what they are looking at and interested in, helps this natural process along.

Storytelling and book-reading are an easy way to have regular talking time. Storytelling introduces new words, structure and language patterns that help form the building blocks for reading and writing skills. Reading aloud combines the benefits of talking, listening and storytelling within a single activity and gets parents and carers talking regularly to young children.

Reading to children on a daily basis gives them the best start to life. It is never too early to start communicating.



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About this guide

This guide is a tool for parents and practitioners to encourage communication between parents, carers and young children through book sharing. Books are a great tool for getting parents and carers talking to young children. Regular talking is one of the best ways to help develop speaking and listening skills from a young age.

Reading can help to break down some of the barriers to communication between parents and young children. Some parents say that:

- They don't know what to say to babies and young children
- They don't want to look foolish, as they don't see other people talking to babies
- They think that babies do not understand what is being said

Babies and young children do understand when they are being talked and read to and they respond in many ways, by cooing, babbling and smiling. Talking to babies encourages them to find their own way of communicating and stimulates brain development. However, some parents and carers feel inhibited, foolish or shy. Books give them something to talk about, and can be a great way of overcoming these barriers, getting parents and carers talking to babies and young children.

This guide includes:

- Information on why reading is good for talking
- A handout for parents on sharing books – 2 pages to photocopy
- Reading and talking activity ideas
- Other sources of information and resources

If you would like more information or have any comments on this guide please contact us on:

Bookstart
Booktrust
www.bookstart.org.uk

National Literacy Trust
Email: EWT@literacytrust.org.uk
literacytrust.org.uk

Why reading is good for talking

- Sharing books with babies and young children is a fun way to share talk. Adults and children will both enjoy the experience, which means there is a strong chance it will become a regular activity.
- Talking and listening to young children develops their social and literacy skills and reading aloud is a good way of encouraging two-way communication.
- Babies love the sound of their parents' voices and reading aloud to them can be calming during times of distress or unease. Coupled with the appearance of their favourite book and/or character, it can be a very soothing experience and help build the bond between carer and child.
- Books introduce children to the exciting world of stories and help them learn to express their own thoughts and emotions.
- Stories provide parents and carers with a structure to help them talk aloud to children and listen to their responses. It helps overcome adult inhibitions and provides topics for discussion.
- Reading together gives babies and young children the chance to respond. A gurgle in anticipation of a favourite story ending, or a smile of enjoyment, shows parents and carers that young children like to communicate and do so from a very young age.
- Characters, words and sounds discovered through books can be talked about outside of reading time. Books are an important source of new vocabulary.
- Songs and rhymes are especially good for children as the rhythms and repetitive language make it easier for babies to learn language skills.
- Reading aloud combines the benefits of talking, listening and storytelling within a single activity and helps to build the foundation for language development.
- The majority of brain development occurs in the first three years of a child's life. Reading to babies and young children, and giving them time to respond, will help make the most of this opportunity.

Tips for parents

Sharing books and talking together

Sharing books with babies and young children is a great way of helping them learn to talk, and a wonderful opportunity to share a cuddle at the same time.

- If you are at home, find a quiet place and turn off the TV or radio. This will help your child to listen without distraction.
- There are many talking time opportunities throughout the day and reading can be a regular part of this. Try and keep a book in your bag at all times. Reading together can help a long journey or waiting time pass quickly and enjoyably.
- Your baby will recognise and enjoy the sound of your voice. At times of distress reading can be very calming, particularly when your voice is coupled with her favourite book or character.
- Be slow and clear when you read and don't be afraid to use sing-song or funny voices for characters, or for words or phrases that are repeated throughout the book. After reading a book several times, your baby will anticipate hearing the change in tone and may well show this with a smile, widening of the eyes or a wiggle.
- Don't be embarrassed or shy about using different voices or tones. Your baby will be an enchanted audience.
- You can use props, such as puppets or a favourite cuddly toy, to help bring the words alive and add actions to your words. It all adds to the appeal of spending talking time together.



© Posy Simmonds

Tips for parents

- Give your child time to respond to your chatter. This could be with a babble, arm waving or gentle finger movement. Listening shows how interested you are in hearing what she has to say and encourages her in her natural discovery of communication.
- As well as reading the story, talk about the pictures. Pictures and book characters are a great topic of conversation during and after reading time. If there's a picture of a dog in a book, talk about a dog you know. Or if you see a dog in the park or on the street, refer back to the dog in the book: "Oh look, there is Spot/Scooby Doo/Hairy Maclary..."

"Having read to my own children since birth, I found it frustrating watching my brother's child not being read to at all.

At first it was because he was 'too young' and now it's because he 'can't concentrate', but I feel the two are linked. Had he got into the habit of listening, he might now be able to concentrate for longer. At two-and-a-half he has very poor language skills."

Mother of three, Surrey

- Don't put pressure on your child to name pictures or objects, but if he follows your words, praise him and say the words again.
 - Don't read for too long. Young children get bored easily, so little and often is best. Try regular bedtime or bathtime story sessions.
 - Let other grown-ups – grandparents, carers and older brothers and sisters – join in too. Reading aloud makes sure carers always have plenty to talk about with young children.
- It's good to share favourite books again and again. Repetition helps children to understand and remember the language they hear. It is not unusual for young children to want to hear the same book over and over.
 - Remember, you're not teaching your child to read. You learn to talk a long time before you learn to read, and book sharing is a wonderful way to help your child's language development.



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Changing life stories

Toddlers learn complex actions from picture books

Research suggests that toddlers can learn from even a short reading of a picture book.

A total of 132 children from three different age groups (18 months, 24 months and 30 months) participated in two studies to determine if age influenced a toddler's ability to learn how to construct a simple rattle from a picture-book reading.

In the first study, conducted by psychologist Gabrielle Simcock, , and co-author and psychologist Judy DeLoache, PhD, University of Virginia, two groups of children ages 18, 24 and 30-months, were given one of two picture books. One contained six colour photographs and the other contained coloured pencil drawings that were reproductions of the photograph. At the end of the reading, the children were asked to construct a rattle using the items in front of them. The study revealed that many of the children were able to imitate the actions depicted and described in the book.

"This research shows that very young children can learn to perform novel actions with novel objects from a brief picture book reading interaction. This common form of interaction that takes place very early in children's lives, may provide an important source of information to them about the world around them," said lead author, Gabrielle Simcock, PhD, University of Queensland.

The iconicity (similarity between the actual object and the likeness presented in the book) of the pictures in the books had the most influence on the youngest children's reenactment. The 18-month toddlers were less able to follow the directions given in the book containing coloured-pencil drawings than when they were when given directions from the books containing life-like colour photographs. Due to the age-related difference in the reenactment with the two versions of the picture book, Simcock and DeLoache selected a new group of 24 and 30-month old toddlers to study their reactions to black and white line drawings of the same picture book.

The second study showed that the second group of toddlers performed relatively poorly when given the black and white images compared to the first group of toddlers who were given colour photographs, proving that children are more influenced by iconic images.

"The results expand our understanding of the development of pictorial competence in the second year of life and point to an interaction between symbolic and general representational capacities in the performance of very young children," said Simcock.

Originally created for Talk To Your Baby as APA press release October 2006.

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Two year olds: communication, language and literacy

Why being Two is so important:

Evidence shows that communication, language and literacy are essential foundations for children's life, learning and success. The importance of their early experiences is clearly recognised by the following:

A child's development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes when they are 26.

Allen, G. (2011) Early Intervention: The Next Steps.

Two years is recognised as the 'critical period' for the acquisition and expression of key language skills which increase rapidly.

What happens at Two?

At two years of age children who are typically developing:

- Listen with interest when adults read stories to them. They recognise and respond to many familiar sounds, e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door. They can shift attention to a different task if their attention is fully obtained.
- Can identify action words by pointing to the right picture. E.g. 'Who's jumping?' They understand 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions and are developing understanding of basic concepts (e.g. big / little).
- Learn new words very rapidly and are able to use them in communicating. They use action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now'. They talk in basic sentences and use a variety of questions, e.g. what, where, who?
- Are developing their fine motor skills through making marks and notice detail in the environment.

Comprehension, or the understanding of language, is absolutely crucial to developing effective spoken language skills. It is important for practitioners to share with parents the message that understanding comes before talking. Two year olds can easily become frustrated when they have the understanding but are unable to express what they want to say.



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Effective practice with Two year olds:

Use talk to describe what children are doing by providing a running commentary

Provide opportunities for children to talk with other children and adults about they think, feel, hear and say

Encourage repetition, rhythm and rhyme by using tone and intonation when telling, reciting or singing stories, poems and rhymes from books

Include rhymes from a range of different cultures and encourage parents to share their favourites from their home language

Talk about things that interest children and listen and respond to their ideas by adding to words, gesture and other visual cues to support two-way communication

For children learning English as an additional language, value non-verbal communication and home language.

Tell and read stories to children, using props, puppets and real objects.

Encourage children to recognise marks, shapes and symbols in the environment.

Give children opportunities for making marks using a range of different materials.



Resources:

'the abc of talking with me', a guide from babies and children...for their grown-ups is written by Warwickshire's 'time to talk' Speech and Language Therapists.

<https://timetotalkwarwickshire.wordpress.com/the-abc-of-talking-with-me/>

This accessible little book works well with two year olds with ideas that can be used to develop their communication skills. It is a collection of 26 ideas, one for each letter to the alphabet. It can be enjoyed with a child by looking at the pictures on the right hand pages. Tips for grown-ups are explained on the left hand pages.

Supporting Early Language Development. Spirals for Babies and Toddlers. Nash, M. et al. (2013). A David Fulton Book.


This book is aimed at supporting the practice of practitioners working with babies and the younger preschool child up to three and a half years of age. It is based on the notion that language develops in a sequence in a spiral process that that many activities and strategies can be used to support the four learning spirals i.e. spiral of language learning, spiral of language about communication, spiral of experiential learning and spiral of confidence. It has a comprehensive section on activities to develop language at different ages and stages.

Focussed activities for 18 to 24 months include:

- More things about me; naming body parts
- What is missing?
- Giving a simple object on request
- Responding to requests for items


Focussed activities for 24 to 36 months include:

- Concept baskets
- Begin to use finger-puppet characters to develop the language of emotion
- Painting positive images with your words
- Concept treasure baskets, big, little, in, on and off
- Developing active listening
- Developing turn-taking and use of pronouns 'my', 'your', 'his' and 'her'
- Action words
- Musical ideas and numbers, ideas you can build on



Sound Foundations. A review of the Research Evidence on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care for Children Under Three. Implications for Policy and Practice, (Mathers et al, 2014)

This review examines the evidence for the kinds of environments in which babies and toddlers thrive in the context of early childhood education and care. There is a section on 'Creating the conditions for quality: a focus on two year olds which suggests five key conditions for quality:

- 
- Knowledgeable and capable practitioners, supported by strong leaders
 - A stable staff team with a low turnover
 - Effective staff deployment e.g. favourable ratios, staff continuity
 - Secure, yet stimulating physical environments, engaged and involved families.

'The Twoness of Twos'. Leadership for Two Year Olds. (O'Sullivan and Chambers, London Early Years Foundation)

This paper starts with clear regard for two year olds as a 'distinct group':

By two children have become mobile explorers who have started to develop their independence. Their language skills have not developed enough for them to make their needs known and they do not yet have the social skills to manage turn-taking, sharing or waiting and their tempers can erupt quickly.

It then reviews the evidence for six aspects of leadership that are defined as key to offering a high quality service for two years olds, i.e.:

- Leading Pedagogy
- Leading Learning Spaces
- Leading and Managing a Service
- Leading with Parents
- Leading within the Community
- Leading Your Own Learning

Research evidence shows building on previous experiences, knowledge of which was gained through shared discussions with parents, sustained interactions between adults and children and practitioners who were 'tuned-in' to children's interests, especially during role play were found to be particularly supportive of, and to extend, children's language.


These themes are further developed in the following publication:
'Being and becoming': under threes in focus. Leadership in the early years (2013) National College for Teaching and Leadership.



Tuning in to Two Year Olds. Improving Outcomes for Two Year Olds. (Harrow Council & 4Children)


This booklet for practitioners has sections on:

- Building a two year old brain
- Attachment
- Key Person
- Partnership with parents
- Including children with special educational needs and disabled children
- Communication and Language
- Enabling environments
- Characteristics of Effective Learning
- Heuristic Play
- The Progress Check at Age Two



Each section has over-arching descriptors followed by responses to 'What would this look like?' and a 'Pause for thought' series of questions which act as prompts for practitioners.

50 Fantastic things to do with toddlers: (suitable for use with 16 – 36 months), (2013) Sally and Phill Featherstone.



This book has been written for parents to do activities with young children at home. However, it is also useful for practitioners. It contains 50 simple purposeful play activities that can be done easily with very little equipment and helps children develop key skills at their own pace and to make unhurried important discoveries. Activities include singing, rhyming, painting, etc. Each activity features easy-to-follow instructions with plenty of tips and suggestions for extending learning.

I am two! Working effectively with two year olds and their families. Mathieson, K. (2013). Early Education.

This publication explores how best to support practitioners to work with the parents of two year olds. It includes information on:

- early childhood development and the impact of developmental delay
- the role of early intervention
- supporting practitioners working with two year olds in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development
- behaviour
- identifying developmental delay or emerging SEN or disability
- the progress check at age two
- working with parents to support the learning and development of children in the home environment
- multi-disciplinary working
- the role of health in early childhood.



<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years>



This website provides resources to promote speech, language and communication development including <https://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-practitioners/universally-speaking.aspx>

i.e. Universally speaking – Ages and stages of children’s communication development for children aged birth to five which gives major milestones in language development.

By two years toddlers will usually:

- Use over 50 single words like ‘juice’, ‘car’, ‘biscuit’
- Be starting to put short sentences together with two to three words, such as “more juice” or “bye-bye daddy”
- Be asking simple questions such as “What that?”, “who that?” They might do this quite a lot!
- Understand between 200 and 500 words
- Understand simple questions and instructions like “where’s baby”, “go and get your coat”, “mummy’s turn”
- Enjoy pretend play, such as with their toys, such as feeding dolly or pretending to drive a car usually making noises and talking while playing.
- Become very frustrated when they cannot get their message across. This is one reason for toddler tantrums.

Materials for the Integrated Review integrating the Early Years Foundation Stage progress check and the Healthy Child Programme programme health and development review at 2 to 2 ½ years include materials for practitioners:

www.ncb.org.uk/.../ncb_integrated_review_supporting_materials_for_pr...

A toolkit for Local Authorities:

www.ncb.org.uk/.../integrated-review-at-2-a-toolkit-for-local-authorities

And frequently asked questions:

www.foundationyears.org.uk/2012/09/integrated-review-faqs/



Changing life stories

STORY GAME

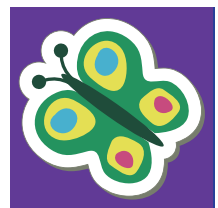
This story game provides a fun way for children to explore **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** by **Bill Martin, Jr.** In order to play children need to be familiar with the book and have heard the story a few times.

Before you play

Everything you need to create the game is included in this pack. Print out the templates for the **game board**, **bingo board**, **question** and **bingo cards**, **spinning dice** and **counters**. Once you have cut these out and laminated them, you are ready to play.

How to play

1. Place the game board in the middle of the group of players along with a pile of question cards and a pile of bingo cards.
2. Each player needs a bingo board and a counter.
3. Players take turns to spin the dice and move around the game board.
4. When a player lands on a space square, he or she picks up a question card. If the player answers correctly, he or she takes a bingo card and places it on their bingo board. If the player answers incorrectly, he or she does not receive a bingo card and play moves on to the next player.
5. When a player lands on a 'free bingo card' space then he or she can take a bingo card without answering a question.
6. The first player to complete their bingo board and shout out 'bingo' is the winner.



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START

question cards

STORY GAME

Bingo cards

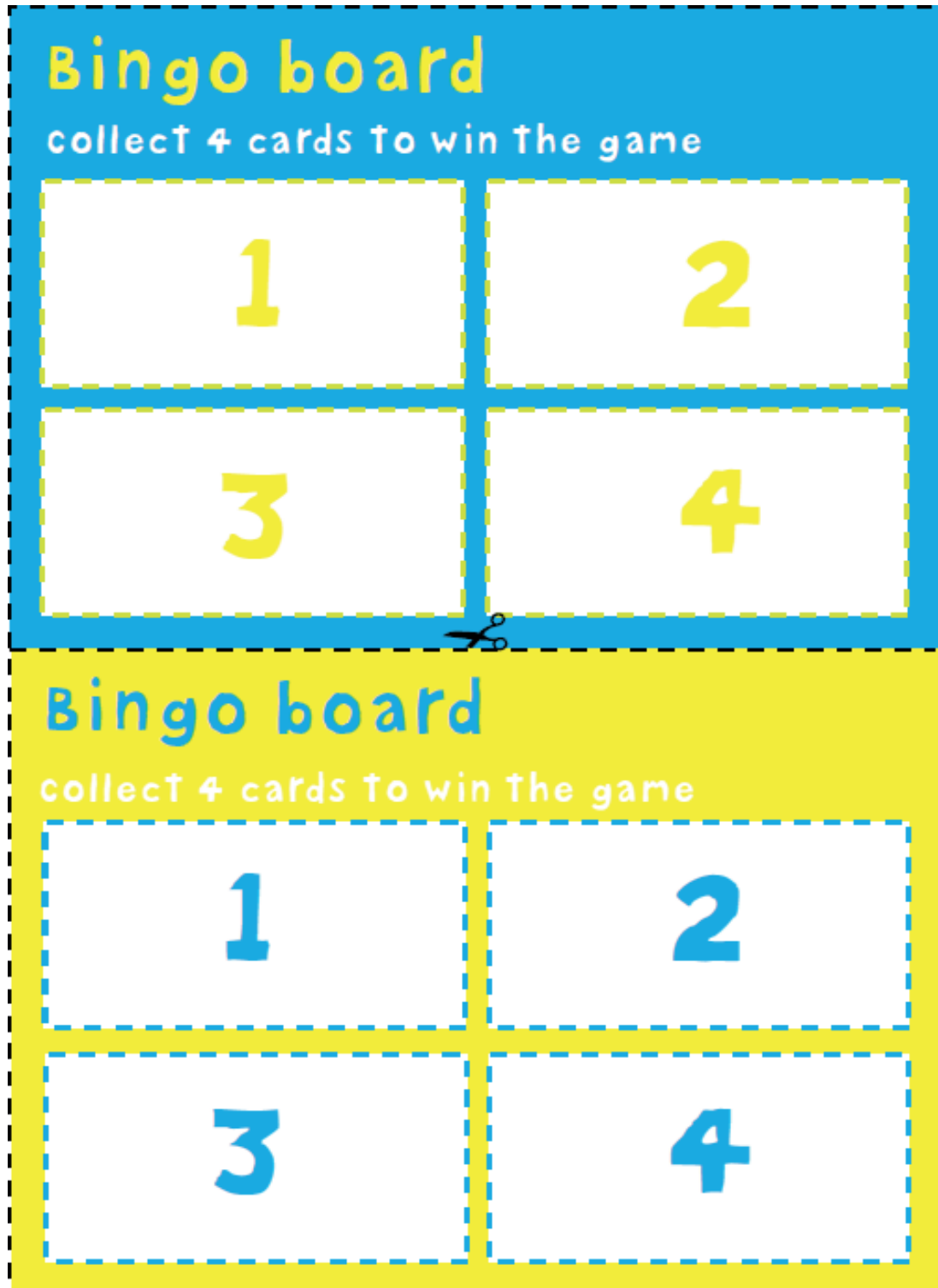
Free bingo card

Free bingo card

Free bingo card

Bingo boards

Each player needs their own bingo board.



Bingo Cards

Cut out the bingo cards, and place in the centre of the game board. Print out as many sheets as you need.



Question Cards - Sheet 1

Print and, if you can, laminate the cards, then place them in the centre of the game board.

<p>Q What colour eyes does the brown bear have?</p>	<p>Q How many claws does the brown bear have on his foot?</p>
<p>Q What colour tail does the red bird have?</p>	<p>Q What colour feet does the yellow duck have?</p>
<p>Q What is your favourite colour in this book?</p>	<p>Q Who sees a purple cat looking at him?</p>
<p>Q How many whiskers does the purple cat have?</p>	<p>Q What colour is the white dog's collar?</p>
<p>Q There's a great picture of a black sheep. Do you know any songs about a black sheep?</p>	<p>Q Find the picture of the yellow duck. Do you know any songs about ducks?</p>

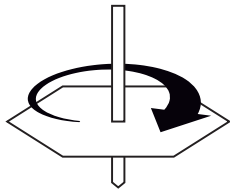
Question Cards - Sheet 2

Print and, if you can, laminate the cards, then place them in the centre of the game board.

 Q What noise do you think the green frog makes?	Q How many children can you count?
Q How many children have blue jumpers?	Q How many animals can the children see?
Q Which animal is green?	Q Which animal has no feet?
Q Which animals might live in a pond?	Q Which two animals are the same colour?
Q Which animal has wings?	Q What is your favourite animal in the story? 

Print and cut out the spinning dice and counters below.
Alternatively, use dice and counters you already have in your setting.

Spinning dice



Counters





Changing life stories

Supporting other languages in the early years

Picture the scene. A childminder says goodbye to a four-year-old at the end of the day. "Bye bye" says the boy, before turning to his parent to say "t'as mon dodo?" Effortlessly, the child has spoken two languages virtually in the same breath! Whilst this might seem amazing, it is not unusual. In the UK today many children's home language is not English. So how do they learn more than one language at once, and what can we do to support them?

Language creates identity

A good starting point is to understand the importance for children of having more than one language. Firstly, and most importantly, there is the issue of cultural identity. Being able to communicate with parents and other family members gives a child a sense of belonging.

Secondly, there are also cognitive benefits for multilingual children. Children who can speak more than one language fluently gain additional routes in terms of their thinking, and this can be reflected in IQ scores. This is because language and thought are closely interlinked. Each language gives children a new way of looking at things and an insight into different cultural attitudes. Bilingualism is an excellent resource throughout their lives.

How children learn more than one language

Babies and young children have the capacity to learn several languages, provided they are sufficiently exposed to them. They do this by at first 'tuning in' to the language and the person who is using it, so a language is primarily associated with a person.

Young children will not necessarily be conscious of speaking more than one language. It will just feel natural to use the language that a familiar person uses with them. This is why children are able to talk to a parent in one language and turn to someone else in the room and use another. It is also why a child may ignore a person who tries out their Spanish if normally that person talks in English. The wrong 'code' is being used and so the child will not respond!

Helping children acquire English

Sometimes children have no English, but speak one or even two home languages. Childminders are well placed to support these children, as the homely environment, consistent care and opportunities for one-to-one interaction provide ideal conditions for language learning.

It must be confusing and potentially frightening for a two or three-year-old to be somewhere and not understand what is being said. Children need to feel that they are in a safe place with a safe person. In practical terms, this means that the settling-in period may need to be taken slowly. A puppet or a special toy is helpful here. It can help to build a

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bridge, because play does not need a language. A little fun goes a long way to building trust and breaking down barriers.

Create a routine for each visit so that children start to know what to expect. For key terms such as 'toilet', 'food' and 'sleep', you can ask parents to teach you their home words. It might also be worth taking some photographs. Pointing at photos and at the same time giving children the words can be an effective way of helping them to pick up the English terms.

Step by step

Children who already have a home language and then learn English seem to follow a pattern. At first, they may be very quiet. This is normal, as they are tuning in to, and absorbing, the sounds of English. By having a routine and sticking to similar words, children will soon start to pick out regularly occurring words and phrases such as 'bye bye', 'snack', 'shoes on' or 'time for tea'. Look out for signs that they are beginning to understand the English code by, for example, smiling or getting their coat.

During this first phase of language learning, it is important to talk to children and, wherever possible, show them what you are talking about. Point to their 'coat' or take them to the window to show them the 'lorry'. The more they hear, and the more often words are linked to objects or pictures, the quicker they can work out the correlation between the sounds and the meaning.

First words

Once children have worked out some of the meanings of words, it takes a little longer for them to start using them. This again is normal, as there is a gap between being able to understand a language (their receptive vocabulary) and actually using it (expressive vocabulary). Pressuring a child to speak rarely works, but letting the child take their time and building a good relationship does.

Once children have begun to use words, they are usually quick to pick up new ones. First words often have special meaning for the child or are part of their daily routine. Words may also be learnt from being with other children. From this point on, children are usually on their way. Soon they start putting two words together, before going on to use sentences.

Tips

- Find out how language is used in the home, and who by.
- Build a relationship with the child and allow longer for settling in.
- Learn a few key words in the child's home language.
- Use photographs and pictures.
- Establish predictable routines and use the same format of language.
- Let children listen before expecting them to speak.
- Introduce the topic of conversation at the start to ensure that children can follow the meaning. For example: "Ducks. You like ducks don't you?"

- Enrich children's language by using rhymes, songs and pointing out specific features or objects.

Potential problems

Whilst many children pick up more than one language simultaneously, some children experience difficulties. These are usually related to the way that they are hearing languages.

Mixing languages

Some speech delay, mispronunciation and mixing of languages can occur when children are spoken to in more than one language by the same person. Children need adults to be consistent with language, as this allows them to tune in more easily and learn the grammar and structure of a language. If a parent begins a conversation in one language and finishes it in another, the child is not likely to realise that separate languages are being used.

This is especially important in the first three or so years of a child's life. Once children are fluent, language 'hopping' becomes less of an issue. A useful rule to remember is 'one person, one language'. If this is not possible, then language should be linked to situations, for example one language used consistently at bath and bed time.

Lack of exposure

If a bilingual child has insufficient exposure to one of their languages, there is a danger of the other language becoming dominant. The child may lose the ability to think in one of their languages and become frustrated as they cannot say what immediately comes into their minds. Interestingly, whilst at first the focus is often on ensuring that pre-school children gain enough English, later on the situation may need to be reversed, as school-aged children may spend longer using English than their home language. This can lead to them becoming reluctant to use their home language, although they still can understand it.

Practitioners can help children maintain their home language by playing songs, story tapes, nursery rhymes or watching videos in that language. Although this is not ideal as children are not using the language actively, it can be of some assistance.

Feeling embarrassed

It is important that children feel comfortable about speaking their home language.

Sometimes older children become self-conscious about using their home language as they don't want to seem different. Valuing a child's ability to speak another language, without it becoming an issue, is important. Avoid situations where children are asked to 'perform' and show others how they can speak another language, unless they are keen to do so.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby. Drawn from Who Minds? Spring 2006 and Nursery World, 2009.



Changing life stories

Celebrating bilingual under-fives

The benefits of being bilingual include:

- Having a wide dual language vocabulary and understanding how language is constructed (grammar) in both languages
- Being able to speak to people in different cultural and language contexts, using the right language and knowing the social codes that go with it, and
- Great capacity for lateral thinking and problem solving.

So how can you help nurture the skills that young bilingual children in your preschool are developing to enable them to realise their potential?

- Find out about the child's home language from the parent - make sure you know what language the child speaks and how to pronounce their name.
- Provide an interpreter for at least the initial meeting with the parent to ensure all the information that needs to be shared both ways is understood.
- Find out from the parents some information about the child's language development in their home language - just as you would for any child.
- Work alongside the parent, especially when settling in, use lots of gestures and open body language - much can be communicated and understood in this way.
- Provide as many 'language bridges' as possible - for example, ask parents for some key words in their child's home language. It is helpful to write them phonetically to help your pronunciation.
- Encourage parents to speak to their child in their home language when in the setting to explain aspects of the new environment, such as where the toilets are or what the different toys and play materials are called and what they are for. Encourage parents to read a book in their home language or talk about the pictures or sit with their child during a story session to interpret.

Children will learn to speak English more readily if their home language is being acknowledged and reinforced.

It is important to show parents and children that you value the languages spoken in local communities. As children become settled they will soon learn to speak English and will do so all the more readily if their home language is being acknowledged and reinforced.

Place posters, books, tapes and games in other languages as well as familiar cultural objects and pictures of people from different ethnic groups in your setting.

Allow children to feel comfortable speaking in their own language to other children or staff in the setting who speak the same language. Other children can be taught to accept this and develop interest in other languages, learning a few words or singing a song, for example, at

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circle time. There are benefits for all children in developing an interest in languages, especially those beings spoken all around them.

There are key points to consider regarding how bilingual children develop their language skills.

- Children from community language homes are already developing language skills as tools for communicating, thinking, engaging with the social world and for making sense of new experiences. Learning English as an additional language should build on this, not seek to replace it.
- Many children can go through a 'silent period' when beginning to learn a new language. This is when they neither speak in their own language or in English while in the setting. This is an important stage when they are taking it all in - 'inputting' rather than 'outputting'- and staff should talk to the child as normal and neither cajole them into talking nor ignore them.
- You should ensure that children learning English as an additional language are exposed to situations where the language is pitched at their level of development and understanding. There is a need for visual materials to support meaning and it is important that there is sufficient opportunity for interacting with other children and adults.
- There is no need for one to one sessions or special activities. Playing with other children and participating in a wide range of activities that encourage communication is the best way to support a child's bilingual development.

Monitoring development

Through regular observation and monitoring you will begin to notice various stages emerging. This is important as knowing what to expect will help you recognise when a child is progressing well, or alert you to a language development problem. Many bilingual children's special needs go unrecognised where staff are unsure of the normal range of language development in young bilinguals. Indicators of normal progress include:

- Developing home language at home with no parental concerns - this is the best indicator of normal language development.
- Joining in with the children in preschool but using non-verbal gestures to indicate meaning.
- Going through a 'silent period' for a few weeks in the new setting.
- Watching what other children do and copying their actions.
- Imitating and echoing what others say - especially enjoying the repeated lines of a song, rhyme or story.
- Using a few words in English for significant or favourite things.
- Picking up phrases and repeating as one word e.g. 'me-wanna-do-it', or 'siddown-juice-time'.

- Choosing their home language when playing with other speakers and wanting to write in home language - in some cases with awareness of the different script of the home language.
- Preferring stories as a means of trying out skills in English.
- Mixing the two languages in the same sentence to convey meaning.
- Being able to converse with children in English, but understanding more than he/she can say.

Bilingualism is not a learning difficulty, nor is it the cause of learning difficulties.

If, in the first few months in preschool, children new to English are developing as above then they are likely to go on widening their vocabulary and being increasingly skilful with grammar and syntax.

Bilingualism is a significant achievement in very young children and their efforts should not go unrecognised. It is important to stress that bilingualism is not a learning difficulty, nor is it the cause of learning difficulties. Provide praise and encouragement, monitor and support development and work with parents, stressing the value of the home language in the child's life, and then bilingual achievers in your care will benefit from the sound starting points they have gained in preschool.

Other useful terms

- Simultaneous bilingualism – two or more languages are acquired before the age of three
- Successive or sequential bilingualism – one language is established, a second is learned later
- Additive bilingualism – the first language and culture associated with it continue to be developed and valued
- Subtractive bilingualism – the second language is added at the expense of the first

Recommended reading: Supporting Identity, Diversity and Language in the Early Years by Iram Siraj Blachford and Priscilla Clarke (Open University Press).

For more information visit: <https://naldic.org.uk/> - the national subject association for English as an additional language.

Created for Talk to Your Baby (originally from articles in From Under Five magazine and Nursery World)



Changing life stories

Top tips for parents

Tips for parents to help children learn their home language and English

- Always talk a lot to your child in your language. Even when the child is too little to understand you should talk to them about what you are doing when you are playing, reading, cooking, writing and shopping.
- Teach your child nursery rhymes and songs in your own language.
- Tell your child stories in your language. Encourage your child to join in with the story telling.
- Talk to your children about what they did at playgroup, nursery or school in your language. If they use English words, repeat what they have said using your language.
- Don't be frightened to use your language in public. If some people don't like it, it is their problem not yours.
- Make sure that your child knows the names of the different languages he speaks.
- Check that your child knows which language has which name.
- Take your child to concerts, plays, poetry readings, films etc. where they will hear people using your language.
- Try to make sure your children play with children who speak the same home language as they do – use video calls to talk to relatives.
- Find out if there is a community language school in your area where your language is taught. Your child might benefit from attending classes there.
- Try to find books written in your language for your child. If there aren't any at the library, try online. Or you can make your own.
- Help your child feel proud of your language.
- Don't laugh or tease your child because of her accent or if she makes mistakes.
- Don't give up if your child doesn't seem to want to speak in the other language, they will still be reaping the benefits of hearing it and having it around them.
- Don't worry if you slip from one language to another, sometimes the foreign word just won't come to you.
- If an older child seems shy of speaking in the foreign language (some are afraid of making mistakes) then try using puppets as then they can talk through them and it's the puppets that make the mistakes, not them.
- And finally, just keep going.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby. Taken from Bilingual Children: a guide for parents and carers, written by Foufou Savitzky, London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University, 1994.

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Changing life stories

What about bilingualism?

Parents' frequently asked questions

Is it true that all bilingual children start to speak later than monolingual children?

There is no evidence that bilingual children learn to speak later. Some children, whether bilingual or monolingual, learn to speak later than others.

Is it normal for my child to answer me in English when I speak to her in my language?

Many children do this particularly if they know that their parents understand English very well. These children will be able to speak the home language again very quickly if they need to, providing the parents continue to use the home language with them.

My child came to England six months ago and couldn't speak English. He has been at school since then. He doesn't speak at all at school. Should I start speaking English to him?

Many children refuse to speak the new language for a period of time. There are many reasons for this. The school teacher should be asked whether she thinks that the child is simply not wanting to talk until he feels he can do it well or whether he has been teased and is unhappy. If you stop speaking your home language to your child he will feel cut off from everything he has known previously and this might make the situation worse. Plus, confidence in the home language will help him learn English.

You could play games with him, such as guessing the correct English word for items on a tray; seeing who can keep speaking English for the longest time etc. He needs lots of praise and above all he needs you to continue speaking your language to him.

My wife and I are different nationalities, with different languages. We live in England and our baby and young daughter will be educated here. What language should we be speaking to our children?

Children will not get confused by learning more than one language in the household. Up until about the age of 10 or 12, children learn foreign languages almost as if they were one big language. As children, people process language in the frontal lobe of the brain, but later on, the brain has to "scramble" to find storage space somewhere else.

Importantly, learning two or more languages can help a child's development in a mother tongue. It is important for you both to speak to the baby in a language that is natural and fluent for you. It's also important that the baby gets good models of whichever languages are going to be used, so not French dotted with English, for example. Although consistency is important, i.e. one parent speaks one language to the child, that doesn't mean the child should never hear the parent using another language or that there aren't situations during which you may decide it would be appropriate to use the other language.

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I'm not teaching my children my language because it is not a proper language. It isn't even written down and educated people don't speak it.

Being bilingual in any language can have very positive effects on children and their education. It is also important for reasons of identity particularly when children become teenagers. The fact that a language is not written down does not mean it is not a language. It is generally a reflection of the lack of political status and power of the people who speak it. English has not always been a written language.

I'm not teaching my child our family's language. I want him to learn English first then he can learn our language.

Many parents say this. A child who develops good use of their family's language is more likely to develop good English. But if parents use English instead, children will lose their mother tongue. Neither language will progress and the child may have problems in both.

It is important to remember that the younger a child is the easier it is to learn a language. Also children can feel left out in their families when everyone around them is speaking a language they cannot understand.

My children tell me not to speak my language to them in the school playground or in public. Children quickly find out that English is widely used and a powerful language around them. They might pick up the message that other languages are less valuable. You should keep speaking their first language, even if the child answers in English. Children will understand what has been said and continue learning the language. Parents can also use their home language to tell stories and sing songs with their children and watch TV programmes or films and talk about them together. Although it may be hard work to keep up their first language, children will thank their parents when they are older and they understand the advantages of being bilingual.

The school should be encouraged to see bilingualism as an extra skill which the child has. Some children respond very well to being told of the advantages of being bilingual. Attending classes at a community language school can also help children to feel much more positive about their bilingualism.

My child is three years old and is only just beginning to speak. She sees a speech therapist to help her. I've asked my friend for advice who has suggested that we stop speaking our first language in the house and speak only English as otherwise my daughter will become confused. Our English is not very good.

There is no evidence that bilingualism will make it harder for children with speech problems to develop speech. If you stop speaking your language to your child who already has a speech problem there is a possibility that the child will become even more isolated and struggle to speak. A child with a speech problem needs to be surrounded by speech and people who feel confident in their use of language so that she has positive role models and lots of opportunities to acquire language.

If there are any concerns about a child's speech development it is best to consult a speech and language therapist as soon as possible.

I speak Cantonese to my four year old daughter. My husband speaks English to her. When she speaks Cantonese she uses some English words as well as Cantonese. She does the same when she speaks English. Is she confused?

Children will use words that they know rather than not say anything at all. For instance if a child knows the word for 'ice cream' in one language and not the other she will use the word in the language she knows rather than not ask for ice cream at all. The child is not confused. It's a sign of strength - she is making use of all the language she has.

I have remarried and my new husband does not speak our language. I want my children to speak only English at home now so that my husband can understand us.

Can you explain to your husband the advantages of bilingualism and the importance of the mother tongue to the children's identity? He might decide he wants to be bilingual too! You can also explain to the children that there are times when English will be used in the family but this will only be some of the time.

Originally created for Talk to your Baby and updated in 2017.

Original credits: Taken from Bilingual Children: a guide for parents and carers, written by Foufou Savitzky, London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University, 1994 and with additional input from FouFou Savitzky and Charmian Kenner.



Changing life stories

The advantages of bilingualism

Figures suggest that more than 70% of the world's population live with two or more languages. Despite that, many parents, educators and child care professionals believe that learning one language is normal, but that learning two languages could be a burden and put children at risk of delayed speech and language development. This isn't true.

There are many benefits to bilingualism, particularly when a child is using both language regularly:

- Meta-linguistic awareness - bilingualism builds a natural awareness of how language works
- Cognitive flexibility - choosing between languages can develop a flexibility of thinking that can be applied to other problem solving areas
- Social sensitivity – are more tolerant and show sensitivity to others from a young age
- They can be more creative

Parents must support their child learn their family's different languages so that the child can fully function within their family. Also, because language is an integral part of cultural identity, "minority language children risk becoming alienated if they do not learn the home language."

Parents and child care providers should understand that if they want infants and toddlers to benefit from knowing two languages, they should be committed to raising children bilingually. Start dual language learning as early as possible because infants and toddlers are particularly adept at learning languages.

Research shows that bilingual children go through the same basic milestones in language acquisition at the same rate as children who learn only one language. But they need to be given adequate learning environments. Bilingual children begin to babble at the same age as monolingual children. They say their first words at the same age and start to produce multiword sentences at the same age as well.

Many people assume that infants and toddlers can become confused by exposure to two languages. As long as most people around them, family or childcare provider, use one language at a time, the child will learn that this is the appropriate way to use the two languages. Research has shown that most bilingual children keep their languages separate most of the time. When they mix language, it is often to fill gaps in their vocabulary. Mixing languages does not mean that children are confused or impaired; they are simply using all of their language they have to hand.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby, drawing on:

The research of Fred Genesee from McGill University

Zero to Three



Changing life stories

A parent's guide to Television



© Illustrations by Posy Simmonds

When you are tired or busy and need to get the kids 'out of your hair', the easiest thing to do is let them watch TV. But is too much TV bad for children? And how much is too much? Television has been blamed for many of the problems children experience, including poor communication skills, but in the right circumstances it can be beneficial.

What are the best types of programmes for your child?

High-quality educational programmes that have been designed for your child's age-group are best. The most suitable programmes for under-twos complement a young developing mind by containing low stimulus, such as those presented by a single adult speaker. Three to five-year-olds will benefit most from programmes that ask for verbal responses, and offer a balance between familiar and new content.

Making sure that your child watches age-appropriate programmes can be difficult as an older brother or sister may dominate the remote control. If possible, try to set aside TV time for all siblings, and for yourself.

How much television should your child watch?

Like adults, children sometimes feel tired or stressed and need a chance to relax in front of the box. However, too much television can affect your child's ability to talk, listen and concentrate. Watching TV involves one-way communication - your child is passive and can 'switch off' from what they are viewing. Two-way communication, on the other hand, where your child is interacting with somebody, requires them to listen and express themselves and helps to develop their communication and social skills.

Try to limit your child's daily TV time to no more than half an hour for under-twos and an hour for three to five-year-olds. Always turn off the TV when no one is watching, because constant background noise can distract parents and children from listening and talking to one another, and of course playing together.

What can you do to make TV beneficial?

Your child will benefit most from age appropriate TV or videos if they talk about what they have watched with an adult. So where possible, try to watch together. Select shows that you both enjoy, as shared interest will naturally lead to conversation.

When the programme has finished, switch off the TV and talk about what happened in the story or sing songs from the show. If your child has toys related to a programme, encourage imaginative play when the set is switched off.

Should your child have a TV in his or her bedroom?

Giving your child a TV for their bedroom gives you less control over what they watch, increasing the likelihood of inappropriate viewing. Your child is more likely to watch alone, unable to talk about what they have seen or ask questions if confused.

Watching too much TV, which is more likely if your child has their own set, reduces time for more beneficial activities like play, reading books and talking. There is also a risk that your child will become dependent on having the TV on before they can drift off to sleep. If your child does have a TV in their room - for example, if they share with a sibling - make sure it is closely monitored.

Are DVDs better than TV?

DvDs can be better than television as the repetition and familiarity of words and phrases makes it easier for children to learn from them. It might not be your idea of heaven to watch the same video again and again, but your child will benefit more from watching the same video regularly, than from watching new material every time.

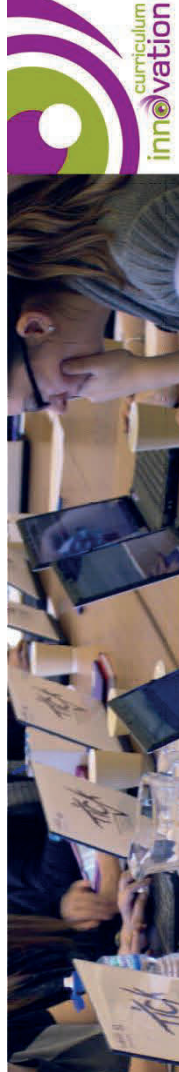


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Resources



Curriculum Innovation's guide to using technology in EYFS v2



Created in partnership with:

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Blakehill Primary School, Bradford

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This document was developed at the request of many Early Years practitioners who wanted information about technologies appropriate for use in EYFS and how could they be used for maximum impact on learning outcomes for their children.

The only statement in the DfE **Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation stage** is in the Early Learning Goals section within **Understanding the World** where it states that, '**children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes**'. We understand that technology can be used to support the vast majority of the other ELGs as well and this document outlines a range of suitable technology and suggested activities to help EYFS practitioners achieve this.

We have tried to keep the guidance as concise and easy to access as possible under the following headings: **Digital Images & Video, Sound & Audio, Tablet Devices, Remote & Programmable Toys and Computers & Large Touchscreen Technologies.**

Resources

Learning Opportunities

Play with sounds - role-play phones, microphones, tube telephones.
Explore ways of creating a range of sounds.
Recognise symbols for play, stop and record.
Learn how to playback sounds.
Make listening and recording choices.
Record sounds and voice on a device.
Use sound resources to support learning in literacy and music.
Alter voice to ensure clarity e.g. volume, distance from microphone, background noise, speaking/singing clearly and fluently.

Vocabulary

Play
Record
Stop
Skip
Track
Microphone
Telephone
CD (compact disc)
CD player
iPod / iPad

Top Tips

Listening provision to be organised in a quiet area of the setting with space for children to dance / perform.
Test the technology before you buy it to ensure the quality of the recording.
Teach the children to say their names as part of their recording to identify their audio clip.
Know how to transfer clips off the device and delete clips ready for the next child.

Sound & Audio

Role of the Practitioner

Demonstrate and model the use of sound playing / recording devices.
Observe the children's use of such devices.
Encourage the children to talk about the sounds they have recorded.
Provide an audience for the children to share their recordings with others.
Discuss and provide opportunities to improve their recordings by re-recording.
Provide purposeful contexts for recording.
Record, save, download and delete audio.

Resources

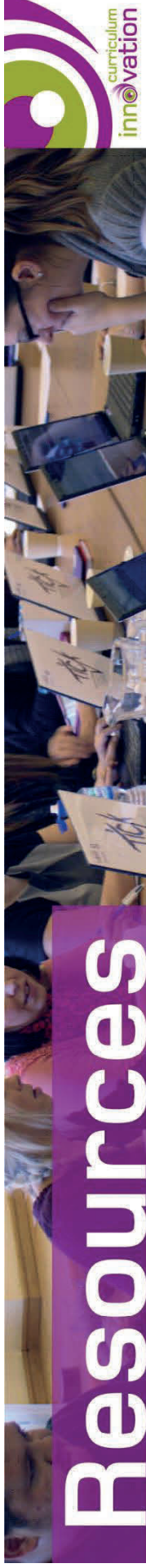
CD player
iPod / iPad
Easi-ears
Talking Peg / Postcard / Point
Chatter-Box
Voice changers
Easi-Speak
Sonic Explorer
Walkie Talkie
Talking Photo Album

Suggested Play/Provision/Activity

Listening area:

- Stories (downloaded and recorded by adults and children).
- Music and dance tracks.

Go on a sound walk around the setting.
Make your own books using a Talking Book or Chatterbox.
Use Talking Postcards / Pegs on displays with challenges on e.g. can you find...?
Use QR codes to create interactive audio activities.



Resources

Learning Opportunities

Share and take turns using the toys with care.
Observe others and offer suggestions.
Talk about the effects of their commands on the movement of the toys / technology.
Give and follow instructions / directions.
Develop fine motor control by recognising and using switches and buttons on devices.
Help to change batteries.
Create and follow sequences of instructions and use this to move toys to specific points.
Explore and understand space and direction language using real 3D objects.
Create environments for toys to move around.

Vocabulary

Switch / Power / Battery
Sound
Arrow
Forwards / Backwards / Reverse
Turn left / Turn right
Pause / Clear
Sequence
Actions
Count
Near / Next to / In front of / Behind

Top Tips

Use rechargeable batteries, have a system to change them and keep spares available.
Some programmable toys need a smooth surface in order to move freely across.
If children wish to move toys by hand pick them up with care to avoid damage to the motor.
If used on a table, use a tray with an edge to stop the toys falling off.
Floor mats with grids makes it easier to calculate the distance and direction moved between other objects on the mat.
Use remote controlled vehicles if a child has difficulty in using a programmable toy.

Remote & Programmable Toys

Role of the Practitioner

Allow experimentation and play with care before directing use of toys.
Ensure that all children have opportunities to use the toys.
Observe and support children who press buttons randomly and build up their understanding of the relationship between the buttons on the device and how it moves.
Introduce basic single movements first, explain the use of the clear button and slowly introduce sequences of actions.
Encourage children to count aloud the number of turns and squares moved.

Resources

Remote controlled toys / vehicles
BeeBots / Constructabots
Battery charger and rechargeable batteries
Tray to contain toys on a table
Gridded mats to move toys / devices around
Resources for children to create their own environments / obstacles to travel around
Screwdriver to access batteries on the device

Suggested Play / Provision / Activity

Give children opportunities to play / explore remote control toys and programmable devices.
Encourage children to create their own paths around objects of their choice.
Create step by step or a series of instructions to move devices around printed or wipeable mats with grids on to achieve an outcome.
Use the journeys around the mats / objects to tell a familiar story.
Use shapes, numbers, letters, photos as target squares on the mats / grids.



Resources

Learning Opportunities

- Mimic adults in play/role play.
- Allow children to take photos / video with a camera.
- Be able to review pictures / video taken.
- Record content / learning with a purpose (child initiated) e.g. photographing / videoing artwork or drama / play activities.
- Explore ways of using a camera effectively e.g. blurring caused by moving the camera when taking a photograph.
- Know not to look directly into the sun.

Vocabulary

- Camera
- iPod / iPad
- Shutter / Lens
- Play / Rewind / Pause / Stop
- Photograph / Video
- Image
- Zoom
- Battery
- Download / Upload
- Memory card

Top Tips

- Where possible use cameras with straps or cameras designed for EYFS to minimise dropping / damaging devices.
- If using iPods / iPads invest in suitable rugged protective cases.
- Use cameras with large viewing screens and minimal buttons and menus.
- Take images and videos with light behind you.
- Have clear and easy systems in place for transferring images and videos off the devices for safekeeping and try minimising the number of videos and files actually on the device.

Digital Images & Video

Role of the Practitioner

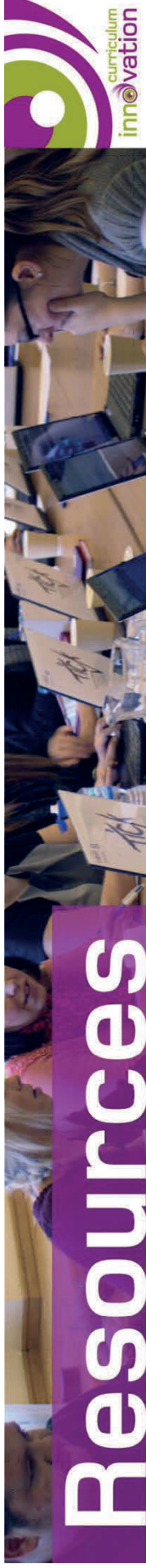
- To display / save / organise the content taken by the children:
- Save, print out and display images.
 - Share images / video online for other audiences to access or via QR codes.
 - Combine / sequence images to show learning in other apps software such as Pic Collage or as a slideshow.
- Observe children's choices and model / suggest effective ways to use the technology.

Resources

- Play cameras
- Tuff-Cam / Digital camera
- iPod / iPad / other tablets
- Webcam
- Visualiser / IWB / Plasma screen
- Easi-Scope
- Photostory 3 / Pic Collage / Photo Peach
- Blog
- Digital photo frame

Suggested Play/Provision/Activity

- Create a sequence of pictures that instruct e.g. counting or making a sandwich.
- Use cameras in role-play.
- Go on a shape hunt - search for and take pictures of shapes in their environment.
- 'Photographer / film maker of the week' competition displaying best image / video.
- Record images / videos of family, friends, activities, acting out / retelling stories, sequencing activities, creating vocabulary cards, personalised jigsaws, etc.



Resources

Learning Opportunities

Understand basic touchscreen skills including pinch to resize and finger and thumb to rotate. Develop fine motor skills through making marks in apps such as Doodlecast. Create / record sound and make music. Listen, read, watch and create content in apps and interactive stories. Record and share images and video. Develop spatial awareness through a variety of programming apps such as BeeBot. Care for an animal (class pet using Kinectimals). Explore other environments through Green Screen activities.

Vocabulary

Tablet / iPad / Android
Power button / Home button / Volume Menu
Swipe / Pinch / Drag / Rotate
App
Tap
Icon
Resize / Zoom

Top Tips

Allow children to make choices about their learning.
Hide apps you do not want children to use inside folders at the furthest screen from the homepage.
Enable restrictions so children do not delete, download, or buy in app purchases, etc.
Ensure you have a suitable screen protector and protective case (avoid flip covers).
Can the device be easily used by EYFS children?
Are apps simple to navigate and can you get back to basic levels in games easily?

Tablet Devices

Role of the Practitioner

Model how to use the device safely / carefully with a minimum number of apps to choose. Support children to choose activities using the tablet e.g. to create a drawing, take a photo. Introduce focused activities using the device e.g. make a picture collage of four friends. Encourage children to share and talk about their work with others on the device or via a larger connected display. Encourage children to sustain their focus in one app or activity independently or collaboratively and talk about their use of the device.

Resources (apps)

iPad / iPod / Android Tablet / Kindle Fire
Doodlecast
i-nigma
Pic Collage
Tellagami
Interactive books
Green Screen by Doink
Camera App
Chatterpix
Puppet Pals / Sock Puppets
Beebot / Busy Things
(Extensive list on the website)

Suggested Play/Provision/Activity

Ask children to role-play short stories or scenarios using Puppet Pals / Sock Puppets and record this as a video.
Take pictures and video using the camera app (directed or through free choice) and then share / discuss their recordings.
Use children's pictures or other background images as a Green Screen activity with children role-playing in front.
Read, listen to and record their own voices using interactive book apps.
Combine pictures in a sequence using Pic Collage.



Resources

Learning Opportunities

Develop awareness and skills using a mouse, trackpad, keyboard and touchscreen.
Develop understanding and ability to logon, save, print, close / shut down.
Talk about safe use of technology and behave in a kind and considerate way to others in the real and virtual world.
Know to talk to a trusted adult if they come across content that makes them feel sad, scared or confused.
Interact with a range of appropriate software purposefully using a mouse, trackpad, keyboard and touchscreen.
Create and edit basic text and painted art.

Vocabulary

Computer / Mac / PC / Laptop
Mouse / Trackpad / Keyboard
Screen / Display / Monitor
Power button / On button
Volume / Loudness
Menu / Drag / Click / Icon
Program / App / Software
Folder / Save/ Open / Trash / Delete

Top Tips

Allow children to make choices about their learning and ensure there is access to a limited number of apps / software.
Be very familiar with the apps / software and how they work before using with children.
Enable any restrictions on the device so children do not delete or move files.
Use mice and keyboards suitable for EYFS children in terms of size and layout.
Set up the printer to prevent multiple printed copies by children repetitively clicking.
Are heights of IWBs / Plasmas / LCDs appropriate for the children to use?

Computers and Large Touchscreen Technologies

Role of the Practitioner

Model how to use the device safely / carefully with minimum number of programs to choose.
Help children navigate menus and use the mouse / trackpad / touchscreen and keyboard effectively within a specific software.
Introduce focused activities using the device to master the software.
Support children to choose activities using familiar software to express themselves.
Briefly introduce new programs at group times or in small groups.
Encourage children to talk about their use of computers and other technology.

Resources (software / content)

2Simple Infant Video Toolkit
Purple Mash
Just Grandma and Me
The Tortoise and the Hare
Izzy's Story Skills
Cat in the Hat / Dr Seuss's ABC
Bailey's Book House
Millie's Maths House
Sammy's Science House
Trudy's Time and Place!
Charlie Chimp's Big Modelling Party

Suggested Play / Provision / Activity

Interact purposefully with software around a specific curriculum theme or linked to a role-playing activity.
Paint pictures or trace / colour-in templates of images.
Add images and text to simple templates to create birthday cards, stories, etc. and print them out.
Explore interactive digital environments and discuss / share their interactions with these virtual worlds.





HELLO planning template

Area of Focus	
<p>Which area of HELLO are you focusing on (eg section A1&2, B1, C1-3)?</p>	<p>What is the goal of your action plan?</p>
<p>B1 – All practitioners have a secure understanding of babies and young children’s communication, language and literacy development</p>	<p>To ensure that all practitioners within the setting have a clear understanding of children’s communication. Language and Literacy Development.</p>
<p>What will you do? When will it start and finish?</p>	
<p>We will implement a 6 part action plan starting week commencing 7th January 2019 for the period of 8 weeks.</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To devise a questionnaire to distribute to staff to gain a base line of their understanding of Children’s Communication, Language and Literacy Development. This questionnaire to be distributed before the project starts then again at the end to compare results. 2. To organise a staff meeting to share information in regard to the HELLO Project and why we have chosen this area. 3. To produce a power point presentation to explain different aspects of Speech and Language and Literacy. 4. To prepare supporting materials to hand out to staff in staff meeting 5. To organise a training session through Quality 4 Early Years – “Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties.” 6. Staff to review children in their Key Person Group to identify stages of their progression. 	
<p>What resources will you need?</p>	<p>Who will be involved? What will you tell them and when?</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Materials printed from various resources to support training at staff meeting. 2. Power Point Presentation. 3. Questionnaire for staff to be completed at the beginning and at the end 4. Course booked with training provider Quality 4 Years. 	<p>Myself, the manager will lead this action plan. We will hold a staff meeting on the 14th January to share a power point communicating to staff the aim of the action plan and to give a brief overview of Communication, Language and Literacy Development. I will organise training to be delivered from an outside agency. All staff will be responsible for reviewing the progression of their own key children. This will be discussed in each member of staffs 1-1 supervision in the spring term.</p>

Evaluation			
How will you measure effectiveness of your plan?	Who needs to be involved?	What resources do you need (eg questionnaires/WellComm)	Assign dates for pre and post measures.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> By reviewing the data on the staff questionnaires at the start of the action plan period and at the end. By discussions with staff in 1-1 supervisions in regard to each child's stage of development and how we are going to help them progress onto their next stage. 	All Staff	<p>Staff Questionnaire</p> <p>Materials printed from online information and supporting resources.</p> <p>Power Point Presentation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-measure week; week commencing 7th January 2018 Final Evaluation and questionnaires to staff – Week commencing 4th March 2019

Other notes



HELLO case study

All practitioners have a secure understanding of babies and young children's communication, language and literacy development

Created by: Pre-school Manager of
HELLO setting



What was the gap/problem?

After completing the HELLO Tool, I decided to focus on

Section B1,

" All practitioners have a secure understanding of babies and young children's communication, language and literacy development."

This was chosen as we have a staff team with varying experience. We have new staff and staff who have been in the job role for several years.

By exploring this outcome I planned to ensure all staff had the same knowledge and understanding of the stages of children's speech and language development.



What were your goals?

My goals were as follows;

- To ensure that all practitioners within the setting have a clear understanding of children's communication, language and literacy development.
- To review practices uses within the setting to ensure that all aspects of communication and language development were fully supported.
- To review practices in regard to tracking children's speech and language progress.



What did you do?

The action plan that I created contained 6 different parts. These were all carried out with the staff team of 8 members of staff. Each action was as follows.....



What did you do?

Action 1

A questionnaire was devised by myself and distributed to all staff. By distributing the questionnaire I wanted to gain a baseline assessment of each member of staffs understanding of children's communication, language and literacy development. This questionnaire would then be distributed again at the end of the project to see if knowledge had been increased by the different actions of the project.

Communication and Language Staff Questionnaire

Please rate the following questions on a scale of 1-4

1 – Very Confident 2 = Confident 3 – A little unsure 4 – Not at all confident

Name:		
How confident are you <i>likewise</i>		
Understanding how children's speech, language and communication skills develop from the age birth to five years old.		1 2 3 4
Understanding different ways to develop speech, language and communication.		1 2 3 4
Monitoring children's individual progress in relation to their speech and language development.		1 2 3 4
Identifying children's next steps in speech and language development.		1 2 3 4
Identifying the different stages of speech and language linked to ages and stages of development.		1 2 3 4
Knowing who you would contact if you had concerns about a child's speech and language?		1 2 3 4
Discussing a child's speech, language and communication skills with their parents.		1 2 3 4
Sharing your own personal skills and knowledge with colleagues in relation to children's speech, language and communication development		1 2 3 4
Describing the definition of the terms Speech, Language and Communication.		1 2 3 4
Finding the right tools to identify if a child has a speech and language difficulty.		1 2 3 4



What did you do?

Action 2

A staff meeting was organised to share information in regard to the HELLO Project. I discussed the two areas that I had chosen to develop in the setting, and explained why. I shared a power point presentation which I had prepared and handed out supporting materials.

What did you do?

Action 3

The power point that I created contained the following information.

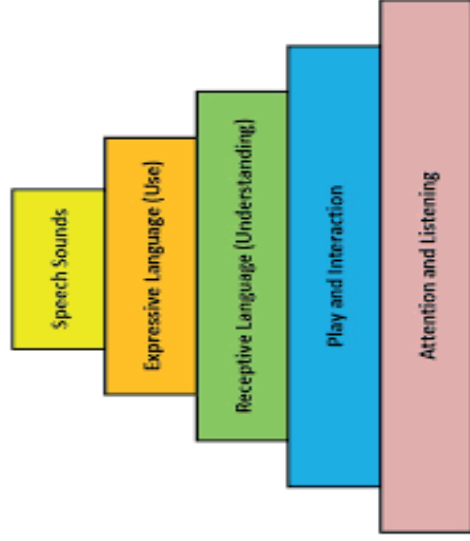
- What is Speech, Language and Communication?
- Stages of communication and language - By ages
- What we use to monitor children's speech and language.
- How do we measure a child's progress?
- What to do if we are concerned?
- Referral to other services.
- Working in partnership with other professionals.



What did you do?

Action 4

As part of the staff meeting I also prepared supporting information to help the staff develop their knowledge and understanding of the different stages of speech and language development.





What did you do?

Action 5

A training session was organised through the training company Quality 4 Early Years - This training focused on "Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties"

The aims of the course were as follows;

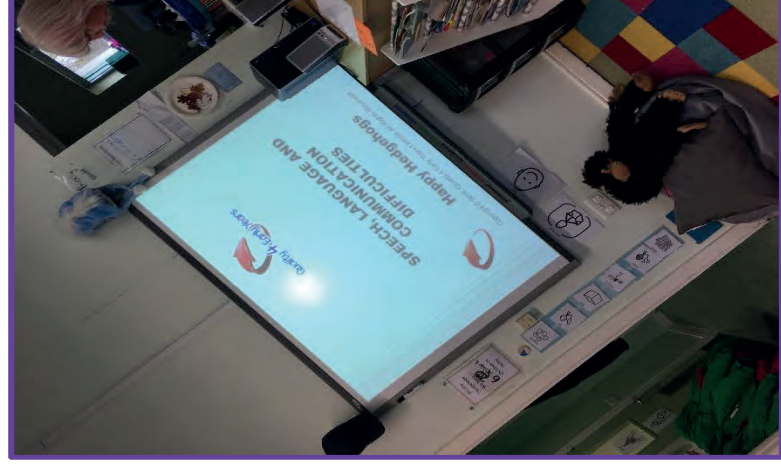
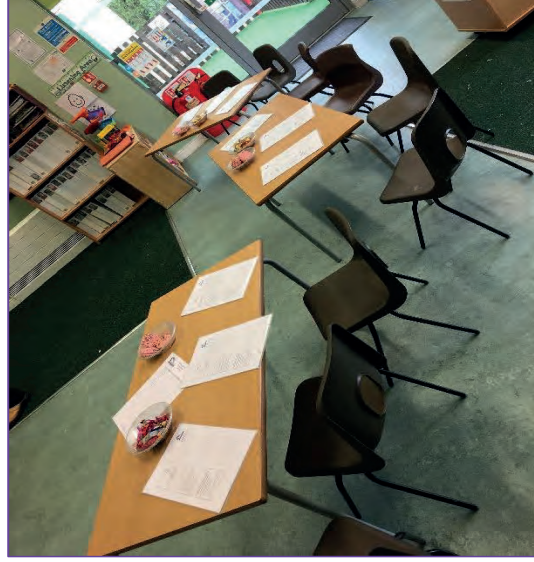
- Develop awareness of the importance of communication as the foundation for all learning,
- Enhance knowledge of the development of speech and language in the EYFS and of difficulties which may occur.
- Increase knowledge of effective strategies to encourage babies and young children to talk.
- Discuss and share planned activities for promoting language in early years settings.





What did you do?

The course was delivered on the 4th April 2019, and staff found it a very interesting and interactive session.

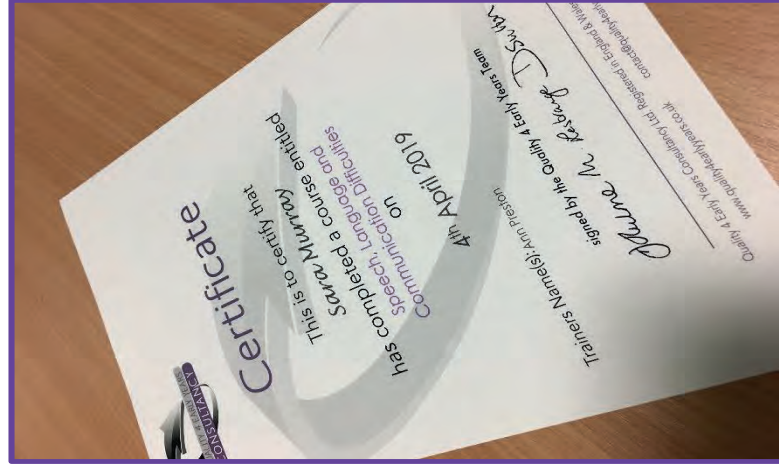




What did you do?



We carried out an activity to show how dummies can effect children's speech!



Interactive Learning Sessions



What did you do?

Action 6

In response to the information gained throughout the staff meeting, power point and training provided I asked staff to think more carefully when tracking their key group of children. I asked them to use the different materials I had provided to assess children's stages of speech, language and communication development.

As each member of staff had a variety of materials I wanted to see whether this made them think and look more closely at each child's stage of development.



What was the impact?

As this action plan was focused around staff and increasing knowledge the full impact I feel has not yet been observed.

The staff filled out the initial questionnaire at the end of the project again. Each member of staff graded their selves higher on each question, so in respect to supporting the knowledge of staff I feel that the project has achieved the outcome initially stated.

Staff are now in the process of assessing their key children's speech and language development. Already staff have approached me to say it has made them look at each child more closely. Some children have been tracked too high previously, and by using supporting documents such as the "Universally Speaking" this has given practitioners a clearer picture of a child's stage of development.



Reflect on the plan

By taking part in this project and focusing on the outcome B1 it has helped us as a staff team reflect on the following:

- Children's different stages of speech and language development.
- Assessment tools we use to track a child's progression - It is important to use various resources to track a child's progress.
- Are we tracking children too high?
- Have we missed children who need additional support?
- Do we provide quality experiences that support children's speech and language.
- Training as a full staff team is more beneficial than staff attending training one at a time. We all got the same message at the same time, so we are now all working towards the same goals.