

# Supporting your child's language skills at home



# CHAT



# PLAY



# READ

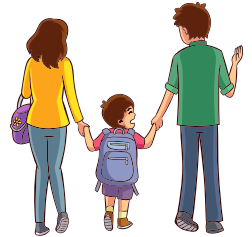
# CHAT

It's good to talk!

Talking with your child helps them develop language skills as they hear new words and helps them practice listening, speaking and taking turns. Pause and wait for your child to think about what you have said. This gives them time to think about how they are going to respond.

## About the day ahead

At breakfast or on the way to school, chat about what will happen that day. This can help your child be prepared for the day ahead. Help them understand what order things will happen using words such as 'first' 'then' 'next' 'later'. You could ask your child to think of what will happen next.



## Packing a bag

Before school or a trip out, pack a bag together. Ask the child what they will need for that day. You could offer choices such as 'Will you need boots or trainers?' This will get the child thinking ahead and talking about the future. Make comments too..., 'You will need your trainers to do PE' or 'You will need your suncream because it will be sunny today'. Name items as you put them in the bag.



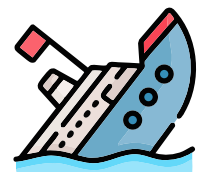
## Things around the home

Talk during everyday activities and routines such as mealtimes, having a bath and doing household jobs. Name what you are using e.g. 'I'm using a **whisk** to make this cake' and talk about what you are doing or what is happening e.g. 'I'm **scrubbing** this pan with a **scourer**'. Use a range of doing words (verbs). Talk about how things look, feel or taste. You could also model words such as empty/full, wet/dry, open/closed, heavy/light etc.



## Extending sentences

Model and add new words and phrases to your child's sentences. For example, your child says 'boat sinking', you say 'yes, the boat is sinking under the water'. By doing this your child will hear what longer sentences sound like and over time they will hopefully be able to use some of these themselves.



## Talk about their interests

Talk about your child's interests and let them take the lead. This should help make them super motivated to talk! Show interest by looking at them, smiling and nodding, and ask a few questions. Keep the conversation going back and forth.



## Speaking in your home language

If you use other languages other than English at home – keep doing it! When you talk in your home language you provide a very rich language model for your child. It also is part of your cultural identity and helps your child stay connected to your heritage and traditions. Speaking in your home language will not affect your child's ability to learn and speak English.



# PLAY

Playing games is an excellent way to support your child's speech and language skills. They won't even know they are learning and practising! Play can also help develop attention and listening skills, motivation to communicate and turn taking. When children are having fun, chemicals are released in the brain and this helps brain development!

## Playing with toys

Talk about what your child is doing and what you are doing. Use doing words (verbs) to describe actions e.g. 'The train is speeding towards the station. It's going under the tunnel and will soon arrive to collect some more passengers'. Make sure you pause and wait regularly so your child can think about what you have said.



## Where things are (Prepositions)

Play is an ideal time to practise describing where things are using words called prepositions. These include words such as in/on/under/behind/above/below/next to/in between. For example, you could say, 'My car is behind the bus, we're on our way to the park'.



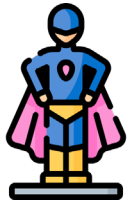
## Get creative

Have arts and crafts time with your child, maybe using things you find around the home. They could create pictures and models about their interests. Follow their lead and talk about what you are both making. Use this as an opportunity to model words that describe, for example, 'I love how your dinosaur has a long spiky tail'. You could also use your pictures and models to create stories!



## Use character figures

Encourage your child to use character figures to act out or make up their own story. You could join in too! This is a great activity to develop imaginative play, turn taking and model vocabulary.



## Role play

Role play is a great way to practise speech and language skills. Choose a scenario, e.g. going to the dentist or going to a fast food restaurant. Take a role each and act out what could happen. Use items around the home to be props (objects that help make your game feel real e.g. phones, pen and paper, books, boxes etc.). These can be pretend items or real ones.



## Computer games

Join in playing computer games with your child. Make comments such as 'You rolled under that spiky bush' or 'I'm going to build a huge castle at the end of this windy road'. This helps your child to hear sentences with lots of describing words. Pretend you don't know how to play to give your child an opportunity to use their language to explain. This also encourages turn taking when talking.



## Screen free games

Playing simple games such as snap, dominoes or completing a jigsaw together can encourage interactions between you and your child. These can help develop skills such as listening, turn taking and waiting.



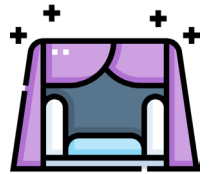
# READ

Sharing stories and looking at books is an excellent way to boost your child's language skills.

Books provide an opportunity to learn new words, learn story language and develop sequencing skills.

## Build a den

Make reading time exciting and fun. You could build a den using towels or sheets and sit together in the den together for story time. Try and find time where you won't be disturbed. Let your child choose the book and stop when your child becomes bored or distracted.



## Front cover

Look at and talk about the front cover – ask 'What can you see? What do you think the title tells us? What could it be about?'. Share your ideas too!



## Use your voice

Share stories by talking about the pictures or reading the words. Use your voice to make the story come alive. Talk loud or quiet, use an accent or try and sound like a pirate! Be as sensible or silly as you like – whatever suits the story you are reading.



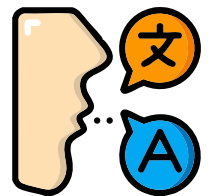
## Emotions

Whilst sharing books, talk about how characters might be feeling and why. This can really help children learn about emotions. For example, you could say, 'I think the boy is shouting because his bike has been stolen. He's really angry!'



## Tell stories in your home language

If you speak other languages than English at home, remember to share stories in your home language. Name things you can see in the pictures and talk about what happens in the story. This will help your child learn new words in your home language which is really important!



## Problem solving

When you come across a 'problem' in a story, talk with your child about ways this could be solved. For example you could say, 'Oh no, the dragon is heading for the tower. What should the princess do?' Share your ideas too and decide together which you think might be the best solution!



## Retell the story

Once you've finished sharing a book ask your child to retell the story. They can use the pictures to help them. This helps them practise using words they might have heard and use story language such as 'Once upon a time...'. You could even encourage your child to see if they can think of a different ending. You could also ask them what was their favourite part of the story and if there was anything they didn't like about the book.



# READ

## Top Tips

- Use a variety of different books. This will help your child learn about different cultures and things they have not experienced such as climbing a mountain or going to the moon! Rhyming books can also be fun and help your child develop their foundation for literacy skills.
- It's okay if your child wants to read a book again and again. Children often have a favourite and this helps them hear new words lots of times which is a great way to learn. Just try and make sure that they also get a chance to listen to other stories too.
- Ask a few questions during and after reading – but not too many. You could base questions on the '5Ws' – *Who? What happened? When? Where? Why?* If you ask one of these questions and your child can't answer, give them a choice e.g. 'Was it the Gruffalo or the Mouse?' or just tell them the answer.

