

Top tips for developing talk

Children don't learn to talk by accident - they need adults to nurture and support their language and communication.

The more adults know and understand about language and how it develops, the easier it is for them to help children improve their talking, understanding and listening skills.

A lot of language development happens between ages 0-5, but the following top tips apply to children and young people of all ages.

1. Get their attention

When children are absorbed in another activity, it can be hard to listen. Say their name first to get their attention and make sure they are listening.

2. Vocabulary is key

Learning and remembering words is incredibly important. Help children of all ages by using all their senses to teach new words. Then build in lots of repetition and practice.

3. Build on what they say

Build on what children know and say already, to support them develop language to go to the next level; for example, taking turns with babies, adding words for toddlers, adding phrases for older children and showing teens how to debate.

4. Talk about what children are interested in

Children and young people are much more motivated to talk when it is about something they are interested in. Ask an open question where the answer is not only yes or no about a favourite hobby, for example.

About us:

For further information, advice and resources on how to develop children's communication skills please go to www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

The Communication Trust is a coalition of nearly 50 voluntary and community organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication.

We harness our collective expertise to support the children's workforce

and commissioners to help develop communication skills of all children and young people, particularly those with speech, language and communication needs.

The Trust was founded in 2007 by children's charities Afasic and I CAN together with BT and the Council for Disabled Children, to ensure that professionals can access the training and advice that they need to support the children they work with.

5. Be careful with questions

When adults use comments and prompts rather than questions, children join in and talk a lot more.

6. Show them the right way

If children make mistakes, it's best to repeat back what they say rather than tell them it's wrong. Say it clearly with the right words, so they can hear how things should sound. Children learn from what they see and hear.

7. Make learning language fun

Play around with words, make up silly rhymes - children of all ages can enjoy the fun of language. Understanding how words are made up and rhyme helps with learning to read.

8. Give children time

Children need time to process what others have said, work out what they are going to say and how they are going to say it. Use facial expression to show you are listening and happy to wait.

9. Check out understanding

Encourage children to ask when they are unsure; check out understanding by asking children if they have understood - can they tell you what they need to do?

10. Have conversations

Communication is a skill like any other - the more it is practised, the better it gets! Children and young people benefit from practising having conversations with adults as well as people their own age.



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