

Let's Talk Together



Welcome

Communication Friendly Homes are crucial in the development of young children's speech, language, and communication. Parents, carers, and extended family have an even bigger role to play in supporting young children to express themselves and communicate their needs, wishes and thoughts with people who provide loving, warm, and trusted relationships. Children need meaningful interactions and experiences both at home within their family and in the wider world. Children are born ready to communicate; they learn and thrive on new situations that are unique to each family and home environment.

This booklet has been created by a group of settings who all have achieved Communication Friendly Setting Status with the Government's Professional Development Programme.

- **Burgoyne Heights Preschool • Canterbury Day Nursery**
- **Halstead Nursery • Hextable Village Pre-school**
- **St Margaret's Nursery • Stepping Stones**
- **Sturry Preschool • Wrap Around Care and Snug Bugs.**

Their skills and knowledge of creating a place where children feel confident and supported to develop their communication has helped create this guide, which is filled with many practical ideas and suggestions for you to do together with your child at home.

It is a guide for reflecting on ways to make your home a place for your child to learn to be a skilled communicator surrounded by familiar people and things. Everyday family experiences provide the building blocks for children to practise communicating with people who are tuned in to them and interested in what they have to say.

The aim of this guide is for you to have fun with your child and together you can explore many possibilities that will connect you to the joys of communicating at home.



Communication is about giving, receiving, and sharing information.

Communication is more than just talking. There are a variety of different ways we can communicate, many of which are non-verbal.



How is your child communicating to you?
Do they have a preferred means of communication?
How do you communicate to your child?
Do you rely only on talking?

Journey of Language Development

Play is an important part of language development. Children learn through exploring objects and interacting with people.
Playing Peekaboo or exploring the leaves at the park, playing in a toy kitchen.



Being able to look, listen, and wait are important in a child's language development.
Crossing the road, listening for sounds in the woods.



Learning to take turns, copy, make and read facial expressions, use gestures all support children's social skills.
Waving hello to a familiar person, going on a seesaw at the park or waiting a turn to go down the slide.
Watching the bus or train come in.

When children develop strong play, social, and listening skills, this helps them to understand words and sentences.
Stopping when a parent/carer says so at traffic lights.
Putting shoes on when asked to go to the park.



Once children understand language, they then can begin to use this to express themselves.
Saying 'hello' when I see my friend.
Asking for a drink or food in the shop.

Developing all these skills will support children in being confident communicators.
They may stumble, mispronounce, or make mistakes with their speech. This is ok, as we can repeat back in the correct way.



Here are some important signs to support you with your child's language development.



Stop - watch your child, how they play, what noises they are making.
Copy their noises, words, actions.



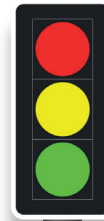
Give way and follow your child's lead.
Let them show you how they want to play or what they want you to do.
Step into their world and interests.
Let them share what they know about their favourite characters, whether this is from a book, TV or film.



Repeat, repeat, repeat!
Repeat everyday words, familiar songs, and stories.



Slow down. Give your children time to understand what you may have said, 10 seconds ideally.
Use single words such as shoes, coat, drink, ball.
Add new words to build your child's vocabulary.



Play ready, steady, go games at every opportunity.
Ready, steady, go when pouring water in the bath, running across the field, or pushing the button to cross the road.



Play with your child.
Engage in back-and-forth conversations with them, even if this is just babbling noises. This starts when they are babies, making their very first sounds.



It is not a one-way street; children will go back and forth in their development.



Top Tips for Communication

Get down to your child's level.

Face to face - ensure you are level and, where possible, in front of your child so they can see your face.

Say your child's name to gain their attention.

Respond to your child's communication attempts.

Repeat and model correct words and grammar.

Wait at least 10 seconds before repeating the word or question you said.

Pause in play; this will encourage your child to respond back to you.

Label what your child is looking or pointing at.

Watch your body language. Is this showing your child you are interested in them?



Enhance your child's communication!

When talking to your child consider using a visual aid to support their understanding.

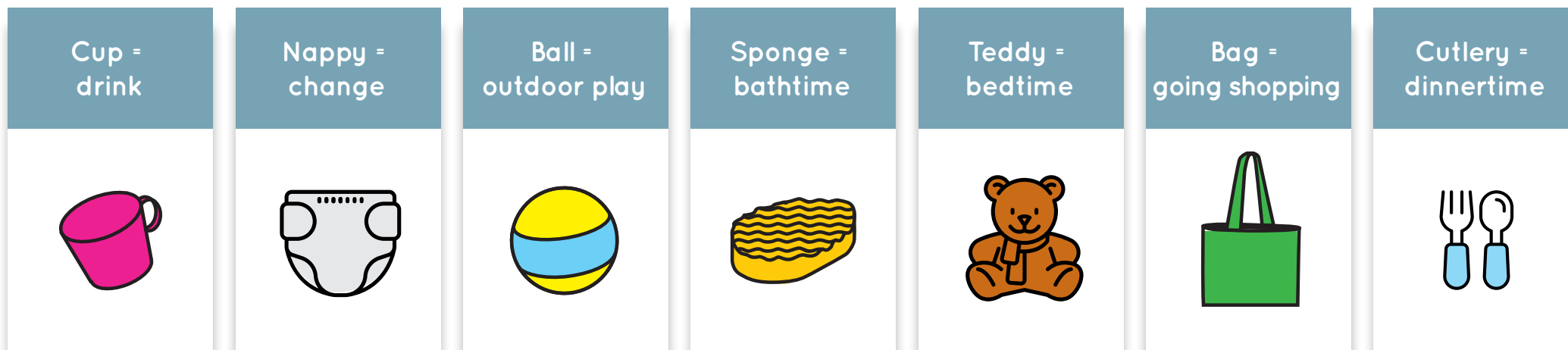
Use objects to represent a person, activity, or an event. You could use a scarf for a parent/carer or a bracelet for a friend.

How to use objects of reference:

- use these as much as you use the spoken word
- start with a few objects for activities which happen often
- keep the objects the same for each activity, event, or person
- use these objects repeatedly in the home and when out and about.



Possible examples of objects to use at home with your children.



Sign Language/Makaton

Using signs and symbols can support your child's understanding of language, but also allow them to communicate back using non-verbal methods. Remember communication is much more than the spoken word.

Makaton is a language programme which uses symbols, signs, and speech to enable children to communicate. It supports the development of those foundational communication skills, including attention and listening, memory, understanding and organisation.

There are some great websites and videos to explore if you are interested in using Makaton with your child.

Makaton

Charity website with free resources, guides, and further information



Mr Tumble and Friends

Fun, child-friendly videos to watch and enjoy together with your child



Singing Hands

Uses Makaton with music, songs, games and activities



Dummies and Bottles

Babies and young children need to practise making sounds and exploring their own mouth and voices before they can use words. Research tells us that children who use dummies or bottles talk less. Have you noticed this?

Using dummies and bottles can soothe babies and young children at bedtime or when they become upset. However, regular and extended use can:

- contribute to delayed communication development
- create problems with your child's speech
- increase their risk of dental problems
- increase risk in hearing problems such as glue ear.



Consider the following.

- ✓ Wean children away from dummies and bottles after 12 months old.
- ✓ Consider the introduction of Sippy cups or straw cups.
- ✓ Ask your child to take their dummy out of their mouth before you talk to each other.
- ✓ Create a special box or place where children can store their dummies, knowing they are kept safe.
- ✓ Throw away the dummy over the weekend; most children after two to three days won't worry.
- ✓ Avoid using bottles for juice or squash.



Bilingualism

Bilingualism is the amazing ability to understand and/or use two or more languages. This is an incredible asset for children and must be celebrated and nurtured.

“It’s a common myth that you should only speak to children in the language that they will be taught in at school.

Evidence suggests that it’s better to speak to your child in all the languages that you speak at home as they’re more likely to pick these up early on” (BBC, Tiny Happy People).

- Talk to your child in your language during daily tasks such as when feeding, changing nappy, getting dressed.
- Use the language you are most comfortable with as this will provide the best examples of words and sentences.
- Repeat words your child says in English, using your own language.
- Sing and tell stories in your home language.
- Add signs and gestures when speaking.
- Provide key words in home language to your child’s nursery, childminder, or school.
- Help your child feel proud of their language.



It is typical for children to mix two languages together

Bilingual children will often go through a silent period

When children know their first language well, they generally go on to speak English well too

Tiny Happy People

10 Multilingual Games for Toddlers



Nursery Rhymes

These are a powerful learning source and support the foundations of children's language. Children need to be exposed to spoken language and nursery rhymes are a fun and enjoyable way to do this at home.

Add puppets or props to bring the rhymes alive.

Make your own, such as using socks for different characters, pots and pans to drum a beat.

Allow children to access the props, so they can repeat in their play.

Children will love hearing their favourite rhymes and songs sung repeatedly.

Use their favourite tunes and change the words, for example, Baby Shark can be sung to the tune of 'Wash your hands'.



Try to sit in front of your child when you are singing. This will allow them to see your face, watch your mouth move with different sounds, look for facial expressions.

You can also pick up and respond to the facial cues your child is giving you.

Children who are learning English as an additional language will find nursery rhymes a fun and interactive way to become familiar with new words.

Nursery rhymes provide short and repeated phrases, often with actions to support understanding.

““

‘Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they’re four years old, they’re usually among the best readers by the time they’re eight’.

Mem Fox, Reading Magic

””

Oh, the grand old Duke of York
 He had ten thousand men
 He marched them up to the top of the hill
 And he marched them down again
 And when they were up they were up
 And when they were down they were down
 And when they were only halfway up
 They were neither up nor down.

Top Tip!

Bounce baby gently on your knee or in your arms. Hold them facing you and lift them up and down to the words of the song.

Older children, get them to march on the spot, raising up or down to the words of the song.

I had a little turtle,

His name was Tiny Tim

I put him in the bathtub to see if he could swim **(make swimming action)**

He drank up all the water **(make drinking actions)**

He ate a bar of soap **(make eating actions)**

And now he’s lying in his bed **(stretch and yawn)**

With bubbles in his throat

Bubble, bubble, bubble,

Bubble, bubble, bubble,

Bubble, bubble, bubble,

Bubble, bubble, pop! **(Clap hands together and say Pop!)**

Top Tip!

Wrap one hand round the other and leave thumb free to create a turtle.



Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
If you see a crocodile
Don't forget to scream!
Aaaah!

Top Tip!

Sit opposite your child and hold their hands or put your baby on your lap facing you.

“Row” back and forwards in time with the music

Don't forget to scream when you see the crocodile!

Wind the bobbin up,
Wind the bobbin up,
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap.

Wind it back again,
Wind it back again,
Pull, pull, clap, clap, clap.

Point to the ceiling,
Point to the floor,
Point to the window,
Point to the door.

Clap your hands together, 1, 2, 3,
And put your hands upon your knee.

Top Tip!

Stretch your child's listening skills and teach them body parts by changing the last line of the song, for example:

And put your hands upon your nose, or

And put your hands upon your tummy.

Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can,
Pat it and prick it and mark it with 'B',
And put it in the oven for baby and me.

Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can,
Mix it and roll it and mark it with 'B',
And put it in the oven for baby and me.

Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can,
Slice the cake up, ready for our tea
What a lovely treat for baby and me.

Top Tip!

Pat your palms together or on your legs to the beat of the song.
See if your baby will clap along with you and praise them if they do.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, **(open and close your hands)**
How I wonder what you are **(open up your hands and shrug).**

Up above the world so high, **(point at the sky)**
Like a diamond in the sky **(make a diamond shape with your fingers).**

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, **(open and close your hands)**
How I wonder what you are **(open up your hands and shrug).**



Incy Wincy spider climbing up the spout, **(join the thumb and index finger on each hand, make a twisting motion as you raise your hands)**

Down came the rain and washed the spider out, **(sprinkle fingers down for the rain and make a sweeping motion)**

Out came the sunshine and dried up all the rain, **(make a big circle with your arms)**

And Incy Wincy spider climbed up the spout again **(join the thumb and index finger on each hand, make a twisting motion as you raise your hands).**



The wheels on the bus go round and round, **(move your hands around in a circle)**

round and round,

round and round,

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all day long

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish, **(move your arms back and forth)**

Swish, swish, swish,

Swish, swish, swish

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
all day long

The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep, **(press an imaginary horn)**

Beep, beep, beep,

Beep, beep, beep

The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep,
all day long..

Sharing Stories

Sharing a story with your child will not only support your relationship, but will develop their vocabulary, imagination, self-esteem and can improve sleep patterns.

- Let your child pick the story they want to share.
- If using a book, hold this so you can all see it.
- Allow your child to hold the book and turn the pages.
- Find a space which is comfortable to sit.
- Turn off TVs, radios, phones or other devices which may distract.

- Talk about pictures in the story, the cover, the characters.
- Use different voices for characters and sound effects such as a car horn beeping.
- Allow time to explore; follow your child's lead, allowing them time to touch, feel, point at pictures for example.
- Give them time to think about and respond to any questions you ask.

- Take a story to the park with you, sit on the bench and enjoy together.
- Visit your local library to find more stories your child enjoys.
- Consider using stories as part of the bedtime routine; they will help settle children and calm their minds.
- Make your own stories using family members, pets, friends, familiar places as the main characters and locations.
- Have fun and enjoy the time together.

Be prepared - your child may want you to read the same story over and over again!



Puppets and Props

Props and puppets are also a creative way of bringing stories to life and supporting those early language skills such as play and attention and listening.

Be creative at home in creating props for your children.

Story Spoons



Use wooden spoons, painting or drawing characters from your child's favourite stories. They can play with these and bring those characters to life.

Sock Puppets*



Reuse your old socks to create hand puppets. Sew or stick features on, like eyes, hair, ears.

*Warning, potential choking hazard due to small parts. Adult supervision required.

Household Objects



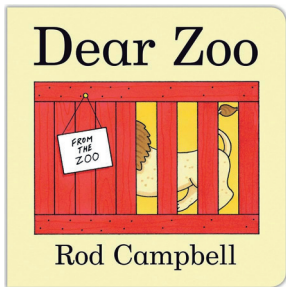
Find everyday household items to support the telling of a story.

Story Sacks

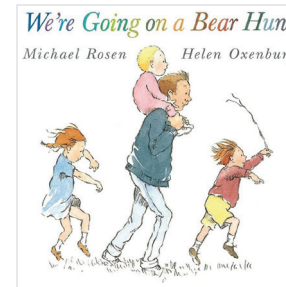


Use a large cloth bag and have items linked to the story. Pull these out and surprise your child.

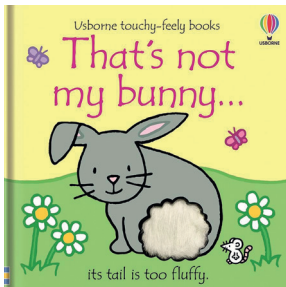
Popular Children's Books



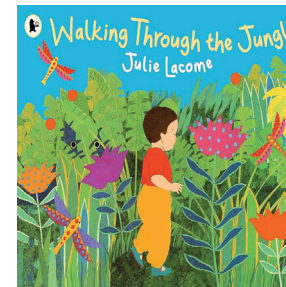
Dear Zoo - lift different flaps and reveal hidden parts of the story.



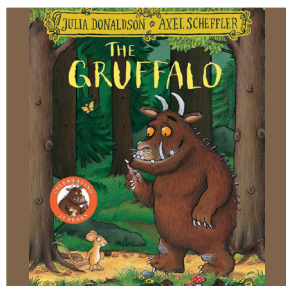
We're Going on a Bear Hunt - you can retell this story when out at a local park, or you can use familiar phrases such as 'We can't go over it' when facing an obstacle.



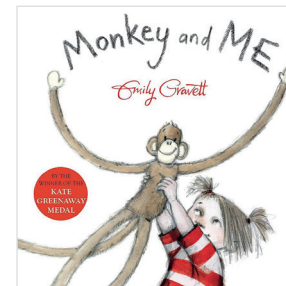
That's not my... variety of different titles, all of which are fun touch and feel books.



Walking Through the Jungle - a great join in and sing along book.



The Gruffalo - fun picture book with lots of repetitive phrases.



Monkey and Me - a guess the animal book, sure to have your children laughing and eager with anticipation.

Prime Time for Communication

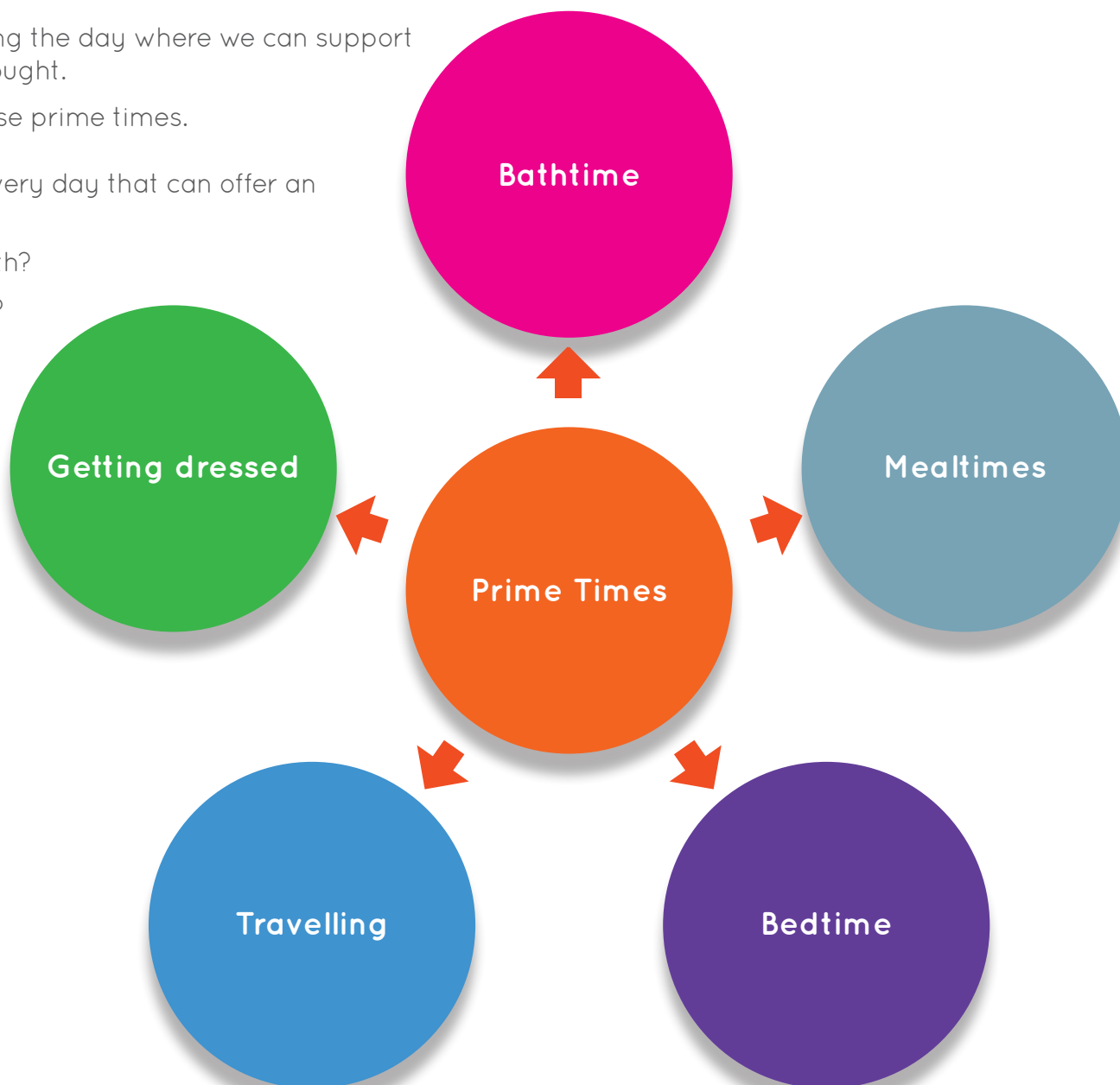
We use language and communication in many daily tasks, which we often take for granted as adults.

For our children, there are many opportunities during the day where we can support their communication without giving it too much thought.

The image to the right gives some examples of these prime times.

Think of your daily routine; what tasks do you do every day that can offer an opportunity to support your child's language.

- What tasks do your children already help you with?
- When do you have close contact with your child?



Mealtimes

Listening and Attention

- Eye contact.
- Listening to words.
- Making sounds such as mmm, yum, ahh.

Understanding Language

- Labelling objects such as cup, bowl, spoon.
- Copying child's word and adding a new, for example, red spoon.

Social Communication

- Gesturing, for example, bring hand up to mouth.
- Pointing to what they want.
- Taking turns either with their attempts to communicate or when having a conversation.
- Looking at adults' facial expressions.

Using Language

- Asking for a drink.
- Having a conversation about their day.
- Talking about their food.

Play

- Exploring utensils.
- Holding cups and plates.
- Playing games with family members.
- Strengthening mouth muscles.

Top Tips

- ✓ Allow children to help lay the table or prepare the food.
- ✓ Talk to children about what you are doing, for example, cutting vegetables, stirring the dinner.
- ✓ Sit together as a family.
- ✓ Turn off background distractions such as TVs to aid your child's listening and attention.



Bathtime

Play

- Blowing bubbles.
- Adding bath toys to explore.

Understanding

- Hearing words such as splish, splash.
- Labelling objects such as sponge, cup, towel, bubbles.

Social Communication

- Watching facial expressions.
- Taking turns to pour water or splash.

Using Language

- Using words they have heard.
- Asking for 'more' when splashing or blowing bubbles.

Listening and Attention

- Ready, steady, go games.
- Singing songs and doing actions.

Top Tips

- ✓ Add plastic cups, bowls, and jugs for children to explore the water with.
- ✓ Copy their actions.
- ✓ Talk about what your child is doing, for example, splashing in the water.
- ✓ Tell your child what you are about to do, for example, get the towel to dry them off.
- ✓ Add bath books or toys to extend their language.



Top Tips for Bedtime

- Have an agreed time for bed and stick with it; this will support your child to know when to switch off.
- This time should be calm; avoid lots of jumping around.
- Keep the routine consistent with the activities completed in the same order each day.
- Find a space which is comfortable for you and your child, for example, laying on the bed or sitting on a chair.
- Share a story with your child.
- Physical contact supports your child's wellbeing which will make them feel more confident. Confidence leads to them feeling safe and having a willingness to learn.



Top Tips for Travelling

Whether you drive, walk, get on a bus or train to travel to a destination, they all provide an opportunity for communication.

- Take your time; leave an extra 15 minutes to allow your child to take in what they see.
- Talk to your child about what they can see. Label what you see: car, dog, bus, park etc.
- Talk about what you can hear; this will support children's listening skills.
- Put away your mobile; you will have time later to check it.
- Retell past experiences with your child when you walk past somewhere you have visited before. "Remember when you went really fast down the slide?"



Screen Time

In today's world technology is everywhere and can play a huge part in our lives. However, we must be mindful that it doesn't replace the connections and interactions children need to support their communication.

World Health Organisation (2019) recommends the following amount of screen time:

- under two years old - screen time is not recommended
- between ages of two to four years - no more than one hour daily
- five years and older - no more than two hours daily.

Top Tips:

- ✓ Try to avoid screen time before bed and during mealtimes.
- ✓ Use screens together and for a purpose.
- ✓ Download the Libby App to share stories on a screen.
- ✓ Make sure you are aware of the apps and games your child is playing on.
- ✓ Turn screens off when you are talking to your child.
- ✓ Remember face-to-face interaction is better than online interaction!

NSPCC Guidelines

Online Safety



Speech and Language UK

Myth Buster



Libby App

<https://www.overdrive.com/apps/libby>



Useful Websites and Further Guidance

There are many websites available to support you further with your child's communication and language development.



Speech and
Language UK

Speech and Language UK

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/>



Bookstart from The Book Trust. Their aim is to encourage children to have a love of books, stories, and rhymes.

Free packs for children at different stages.

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/>



National
Literacy
Trust

National Literacy Trust provides a wealth of resources and information to support children's literacy development. They also provide a wide range of dual language resources.

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>



Words for Life

Words for Life - fun activities and ideas to do with children.

<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/>



the pod

NHS The Pod

Information, videos and leaflets on speech and language.

<https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/childrens-therapies-the-pod/speech-and-language-therapy/>



Better
Health Start
for Life

Better Start- Health for Life: Early Learning and Development

NHS trusted advice and guidance. Find support for children's communication, confidence, and relationships.

<https://www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/early-learning-development/>

Acknowledgements

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