

The acquisition of language and communication skills are fundamentally important in supporting children to be confident, capable individuals with the potential of becoming independent and successful adults.

Language is a complex life skill that most of us learn and use naturally throughout our daily lives without conscious thought. We use the spoken word to process thoughts, share ideas, feelings and experiences.

Communication & Language



Many skills are required for communication to be successful; the ability to encode or decode messages, maintain attention and listen.

Language is the tool that enables communication and can be the spoken word or non-verbal communication in various forms including facial expression, sign language and the written word.

Promoting Communication & Language

| What to do | Top Tips |
|---|--|
| Value talk | Being an active listener, fully engaging with what your child has to say and showing you value their contribution encourages them to talk, promotes positive relationships and confidence. |
| Wait, watch & wonder | Children will often initiate conversation if given the time, pondering, e.g. using "I wonder" thoughts, is less threatening than asking direct questions. Children are more relaxed and more likely to respond (Fisher, 2016). |
| Thinking time | Young children need time to process before responding. Count to 10 slowly before prompting them. |
| Foster positive attachments | If your child feels safe and comfortable and knows you care about them they are likely to want to talk to you. |
| Avoid asking too many questions | Instead hold a conversation. When you do ask questions make <i>sure</i> these are open and purposeful. Children are more likely to respond in more detail. |
| Allow children to lead play and follow their interests | Engaged, excited learners will want to tell you about their play and exploration. |
| Use a sing song voice with babies | This makes it easier for babies to separate sounds in words and enables them to tune in to what you are saying. |
| Turn technology off | Model putting your own devices to one side. Face-to-face conversations are vital for developing speaking and listening skills and are really rewarding. |



Promoting Communication & Language

| What to do | Top Tips |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Use commentary | Model language by talking about what your child is doing. |
| Use Gestures | Together with spoken language, gestures capture interest and support understanding. |
| Repeat children's language | Using correct pronunciation, word order and extending vocabulary by repeating words, models correct language in a sensitive and positive way. |
| Follow interests | If you talk about what your children are interested in, they are likely to be more motivated to speak. |
| TV Time | Limit the use of TV and watch together as much as possible. It is an excellent way to spark off conversations and learn new words when an adult can reinforce. |
| Quiet times | It's really important to remember that children need quiet time when you turn off background noise and have time just to play. This is really important for listening and language development. |
| Imaginative Play | When children take on a role they express themselves with ease as they get lost in the play. |
| Use technology | Keep in touch with relatives or friends they are separated from at this time e.g. e-mail, send photos, video chats to keep in touch and use it as an opportunity to ask your child what they might want to ask and say. |
| Explore photos | Talk about the differences and similarities – this exercise is great for sharing stories, which are so vital for communication development. For instance, See if you can find a similar photo of when you were young. |

References

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Acknowledgements

With particular thanks to Dr Linda Cooper and Lianna Wilding of the University of Chichester for their contributions to the Understanding the World and Literacy pages.

This document and other information related to SKIP for Early Years Educators can be freely accessed and downloaded from:

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