

Including me!



Ideas for developing early language at home

- Many children understand what you say to them and could begin to speak but they do not need to talk - this actually limits their opportunities to develop spoken language.
- A small child does not have many desires. Meals appear, clothes are changed, they are woken or put to bed automatically. It is very easy to give them so much that they never has to ask for anything. Sometimes create opportunities for them to ask for what they need.
- Do you keep the juice, sweets and biscuits in cupboards they can reach? Try putting them out of reach and encourage them to ask for what they want.
- Do you always ask questions that can be answered with 'yes' and 'no'? Try asking 'What do you want for tea, fish fingers or egg?', so they can respond with saying the name of something and not just 'yes' and 'no'.
- You need to let him/her hear the same simple sentence many times before he/she will attempt to copy them. Talk about what you are doing, and what he/she is doing or things you see e.g. 'It's a lovely day, oh look at those flowers.' 'We're going to the park.' 'I can see the ducks.'
- Keep sentences short and simple for things you want him to understand, do and learn to say ' We're going to Fred'scoat on'. He/she might start to respond by repeating 'coat on'.
- Leave space and time for your child to respond e.g. 'We're going to Fred's ' and hold out his/her coat. Try not to pressure him/her into responding.

STORY TIME

- Use very simple stories. There are lots of good quality picture story books available - try your local library. Look for books with clear pictures and not too much small detail to begin with.
- If your child is not very interested in listening, just talk about the pictures at first. Perhaps see if he can point to one thing on a page before turning to the next page. Gradually encourage him to take more interest in each page.
- Even if he is happy to sit and listen, keep your sentences short and simple and directly related to the action of the picture e.g. 'The boy's sad. Look, he's crying.'
- Try and help the words with actions.
- When you have told a story one night, act it out with dolls in playtime the next day. Children have very short memories and they forget things quickly if they do not have constant repetitions. Have a routine of a story at bedtime when your child is relaxed and happy and wants to sit on your knee and be comfortable with you.
- Nursery rhymes, particularly ones with actions like 'Incy Wincy Spider', 'This Little Piggy', 'The Grand Old Duke of York' are good fun. They get your child listening and relaxed and may be a good start to a story time or a nice game any time during the day - meal times, when your child is in his/her buggy, bath time etc.
- Children enjoy repetition and rhyme - these provide a vitally important basis for talking and conversation.

UNDERSTANDING NAMES OF PARTS OF THE BODY

It is very natural to teach a child to point to his nose, eyes, mouth, ears, hair etc. Children enjoy this game very much and like to point to 'Mummy's eyes' etc.

This gives them a feeling of themselves as a person. They learn to compare themselves with other people, to realise they are a person, an 'I'

or 'me' and not just a 'John' or 'Susan'. It also helps them to notice other people and distinguish boys, girls, men, ladies, mummy and daddy.

Ask your child to point to his nose, eyes, mouth. Start with things on his head.

See if he can show you your nose, your feet.

Can he show dolly's head, nose, tummy?

Can he show his nose/your nose in a mirror?

It is very important he should see himself and other people in the mirror. He cannot 'stand outside himself' any other way.

Try face paints ('make your nose blue' etc), brushing hair in a different way.

Move on to arms, legs, tummy.

Try details like shoulders, elbows knees, chin, eyebrows, toes.

Try songs 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes'

COLOUR MATCHING

Children only learn very gradually that objects can be grouped by colour eg. all the red things in one box and all the blue things in another. Unless you point it out to them, they may take a long time to realise that colour is important. Your child can see the different colours, but may not understand that adults use colour as a way of identifying objects, 'give me the blue one' etc. Children learn by stages and we have to teach each stage.

This is the first stage.

Choose a set of objects which are identical in every way (e.g. size and shape) except colours - bricks are ideal for this, or you can cover yoghurt cartons in paper and colour them red, blue, green, yellow. Beads, cars, cups, socks, gloves can all be used.

Begin with two colours, red and yellow, or red and blue are probably best as these are dissimilar.

a) Pick up one. Ask the child to give you one the same. It is all right to use colour names, e.g. Give me one like this.... a red one... that's yellow, I

want one the same as this one, a red one'. But he/she will not begin to use the names for a good while.

b) When you have played a game with the toys, put them back in groups of their colours. Talk about it 'That's a red one, put the red bricks here, yellow bricks go there'.

c) When you are doing work around the house, try and colour match things. e.g. sorting the washing - hold up a sock and see if the child can find one the same. Ask him to get you another plate 'like this one' and so on.

'IN' AND 'ON'

1. Use two boxes. Turn one upside down. Place a selection of small objects or toys in front of the child. Ask him/her to 'put the fork on the box', 'put the cow in the box'.

2. During the day if he/she is helping you, give him/her tasks to do e.g. 'put the cups on the table', 'put your toys in the cupboard'. Also try something a bit different if possible e.g. 'put something on a small cupboard' which normally goes inside it, 'put your pyjamas in the bed' instead of on (or vice versa).

3. When you are playing with his/her toys, do the same type of things e.g. 'put the dog in the chair', 'put the brick on the bridge'.

NB If you are sure he/she understands 'in' and 'on', and can and can use them to do things like 'put the toys on the box' or 'stand in the box' which are not what he would expect to do, see if he understands 'under'. 'Put the doll under the bed', 'put your scarf under your hat', etc.