

Supporting Speech, Language and Communication

Speech, Language and Communication Screening Tool Resource Pack



Children's Speech and Language Therapy
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Using the Speech, Language and Communication Screening Tool Resource Pack

How to get started

Use the Speech, Language and Communication Screening Tool Manual to complete the appropriate Screening Tool. Try to use the Screening Tool that best reflects the child's overall stage of development. This will help you to best identify strategies to support the child.

You may want to work backwards through Screening Tool age bands until you identify some amber scores. These let us know that this skill is beginning to emerge and we can identify strategies to support this further.

Identifying best starting points

If you have identified a potential need, and impact, in either the **Building Connections** and / or **Speaking** Sections of the Screening Tool you will have been prompted not to complete any additional sections of the Screening Tool. You should focus on recommendations in relation to these two sections only, and as appropriate.

If you find only red scores on all of the Language related sections, after working back through the Screening Tools, we would recommend starting with developing early communication skills. For children with these needs, focus on recommendations from the **Building Connections** and **Following Instructions** Sections.

Where you find a range of amber or red scores, consider what is most **impacting** the child and choose these areas to focus on in the first instance.

You may find just one area in particular.

Plan for **no more than three** areas at a time that you will be focussing on.

Identifying Appropriate Advice Sheets

Use the **Screening Tool Resources** chart for the age band that matches the Screening Tool you have used. For most levels on the Screening Tool, there is a corresponding **Advice Sheet**. Some have more than one.

Advice Sheets all contain a list of **strategies** you can implement. Some also contain activity suggestions for the child's setting and home

You can add these strategies onto any individualised plans you are generating for the child. Use just those strategies you feel will be most beneficial.

Identifying Appropriate Advice and Support Sessions

Use the **Screening Tool Resources** chart for the age band that matches the Screening Tool you have used. For most levels on the screener, there is a corresponding **Advice and Support Session**. Some have more than one.

Advice and Support Sessions are delivered online by a Speech and Language Therapist. Most of the sessions cover more than one level on the Screening Tool both in terms of area of identified need and age band. Follow the link of the Advice and Support Session you would like to access. You will find additional information about the session and how to book.

Generating a speech, language and communication plan

Consider what is impacting your child the most in your setting or at home. Aim to focus in these areas first.

Use the resources to list some strategies you will use and activities you will work through.

We suggest no more than 10 individual strategies to begin with so you can implement these regularly.

If the child is known to the Speech and Language Therapy team, share your plan with the child's Speech and Language Therapist.

A suggested planning sheet is included [here](#).

When do I refer to Speech and Language Therapy?

Complete a Screening Tool with the child you have concerns about. Use the planning page to identify particular **risk factors** for the child. If you cannot find a starting point that you feel will support the child with their speech, language or communication needs, please call our Advice Service with consent from the child's parents/ guardians or speak with a Speech and Language Therapist if they are visiting your setting.

Advice Service Open every Thursday 09:30 – 12:30

Tel: 01228 608177

Where you have identified areas of concerns and strategies you feel will be supportive for the child, implement these for a **minimum of eight weeks** before reviewing. If you notice minimal change in either the child's skill level or the impact of the need on the child then please make a referral. Include your completed Screening Tool and the plan you generated from this with the referral.

Speech, Language and Communication Planning Sheet

Child's Name		Date	
How are the child's needs impacting them in your setting or at home? What are they finding tricky to do?			
Main areas of need identified on the Speech, Language and Communication Screening Tool			
What key strategies will we use			
What activities will we try			
What are we hoping will change when we try their strategies and activities.			
Review Date			

24 - 29 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screener Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Stammering Supporting Quiet Children	Supporting Stammering at Home Supporting Quiet Children
Following Instructions	Single word object	Single word understanding	Supporting Children with Following Instructions
	Single word action	Objects of Reference	Total Communication
	Two word level	Two Word Level Understanding	Visuals
Vocabulary		Early Words Blank Level 1	Early Words Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Sentences	0 word response	Early Words	
	1 word response	Joining Two Words Together	Supporting Early Sentences
Story Telling			
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

30 – 35 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screener Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Stammering Supporting Quiet Children	Supporting Stammering at Home Supporting Quiet Children
Following Instructions	Object Function	Blank Level 2	Supporting Children with Following Instructions Visuals
	Two word level	Two Word Level Understanding	
	Three word level	Three word level understanding	
Vocabulary		Early Words Blank Level 1	Early Words Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Sentences	0 word response	Early Words	
	1 word response	Joining Two Words Together	Supporting Early Sentences
	2 word response	Joining Three Words Together	
Story Telling			
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

36 – 41 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screener Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Supporting Quiet Children Stammering	Supporting Quiet Children Supporting Stammering at Home
Following Instructions	Three word level	Three word level understanding	Supporting Children with Following Instructions Visuals
	Object Function	Blank Level 2	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Who/where questions		Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Vocabulary	Action words	Early Words	Early Words
	Concepts	Concept Development	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Naming	Early Words Vocabulary	Early Words Supporting Vocabulary Development
Sentences	'-ing'	Joining Three Words Together	Supporting Early Sentences
	under	Developing understanding and use of prepositions	
	big	Concept Development	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	1 word response	Joining Two Words Together	Supporting Early Sentences
	2 word response	Joining Three Words Together	
Story Telling	Prompts needed	Sequencing Level 1 Sequencing Level 2	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	No sequence	Blank Level 3	
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

42 – 47 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screeners Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Supporting Quiet Children Stammering	Supporting Quiet Children Supporting Stammering at Home
Following Instructions	Instructions	Following Instructions Concepts	Supporting Children with Following Instructions Visuals
	'wh' questions	Negatives	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Vocabulary	Concepts	Concepts Prepositions	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Naming	Vocabulary	Supporting Vocabulary Development
Sentences	Plural '-s' (regular)	Understanding and using plurals	
	'no'	Negatives	
	'and'	Sequencing Level 1	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Story Telling	Prompts needed	Sequencing Level 2	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	No sequence		
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

48 - 59 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screener Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Supporting Quiet Children Stammering	Supporting Quiet Children Supporting Stammering at Home
Following Instructions	Concepts	Concepts	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Following Directions	Following Instructions	Supporting Children with Following Instructions Visuals
	How/why questions	Blank Level 3 & 4	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Vocabulary	Category/Function	Blank Level 2	
	Concepts	Concepts Prepositions	
	Naming	Vocabulary	Supporting Vocabulary Development
Sentences	'empty'	Concepts	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Past tense	Talking About the Past and Future	
	Future tense		
Story Telling	Prompts needed	Sequencing Level 2 Blank Level 3	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Prompts needed		
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

60 – 71 Months Screening Tool Resources

Screener Section	Level	Advice Sheet(s)	Advice and Support Session(s)
Connection with others		Following child's Lead Mirroring	Total Communication Supporting Language and Communication through Play
Speaking		Supporting Quiet Children Stammering	Supporting Quiet Children Supporting Stammering at Home
Following Instructions	Concepts	Concepts	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	Following Directions	Following Instructions	Supporting Children with Following Instructions Visuals
	Why questions	Blank Level 4	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Vocabulary	Concepts	Concepts	
	Naming	Vocabulary	Supporting Vocabulary Development
Sentences	'because'	Blank Level 3 & 4	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
	'they'	Understanding and using pronouns	
	Plurals (irregular)	Understanding and using plurals	
	Response of 3-4 words	Sequencing (L2)	Supporting Children with Understanding Questions
Story Telling	Prediction Voice of the boy	Blank Level 3 & 4	
	Future Tense	Talking About the Past and Future	
	Response of 3-4 words	Sequencing Level 2	
Speech Sounds		Supporting Children with Unclear Speech	Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

Blank's Language Levels/ Levels of Questioning

Children learn to understand questions in a **developmental** order. This will be in line with how they are developing language more generally and how they are developing their **reasoning** and **understanding** skills.

As children develop, they become more aware of the world around them. They gradually make more and more connections in their learning and move from being able to think about things immediately in front of them to being able to talk about make believe situations and predict what they think might happen in situations.

As these thought processes develop, so does a child's ability to follow increasingly complex questions – examples of these are given on the following pages.

Children become more able to connect ideas together in their talking and progress from using short phrases and sentences about things immediately around them to begin able to generate stories and re-tell events.

This development of verbal reasoning will support many developing language skills including:

- naming
- categorising words
- understanding and using describing words
- sequencing stories
- predicting

Blank, Rose and Berlin in 1978 categorised this development as across 4 levels (Levels 1-4).

To support children with understanding and using language, present at least 80% of your questions at the level your child can be successful at.

Use ideas from the following pages to **scaffold** your child's development to the next level – always focus on the level your child can be successful at and then plan for just **one** level higher. Questions or activities that are two levels higher than where your child is at may be too tricky.

Useful Resources

Twinkl (www.twinkl.co.uk) question and activity ideas for school-based activities and stories

Language for Thinking: A structured approach for young children (Parsons and Branagan)

Test of Abstract Language Comprehension and **PORIC** (www.elklan.co.uk/shop)

Level One (Naming)

Children at this level will typically be using single words or short simple sentences. They will usually be able to understand a simple one step instruction.

Questions they will be most able to respond correctly to will relate to the 'here and now' and require just concrete thinking. Examples include: What's this? Who's this?

They will be developing their skills of naming objects and actions.

They will be developing skills of matching objects and pictures. This is an early stage of connecting words spoken words to objects and action,

How to help a child at this level -

- talk about things in the **immediate** context – things the child can see and hear
- give **one** instruction at a time. At this level children won't be able to remember two piece of information.
- **repeat** what you have said
- children may wish to respond by pointing or using an action.
- **pause** after giving an instruction or asking a question – the child will need time to process the information.
- when reading stories, ask about what the child can **see** rather than how the characters are feeling and what they think might happen. These questions are more appropriate at Level 3. This will be the best way to help increase their vocabulary.
- use lots of **visual cues** to aid their understanding of things e.g. use puppets when reading a story then use them again later if you are doing a task related to the story, use actions and gestures when giving instructions.
- comment as they play rather than asking too many questions
- try not to ask them what has happened in their day as this will be too tricky. Instead lead them in by commenting on something that happened e.g. 'we went on the bus today...' Pause to allow the child to process what you've said and to add to this if they want to.
- relate questions to the child's personal experiences.

Children may not remember or be able to process a single answer to respond to a 'what happened' question when they are at Level 1.

Developing Skill	Level 1 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Naming Objects	What's this? What have you got? What has Molly got? Is this a cat or a dog? What can you see? What did you hear? What's in the pan?	General early word development activities: Naming things the child is interested in Using books/ stories- use real objects to support word learning from pictures where possible Feely bags Focussing on specific categories of words e.g. animals, food, vehicles
Naming Actions	What are you doing? What is Molly doing? What is the dog doing? Fill the bucket.	The child will learn actions best if they can experience the action themselves. Talk about the actions a child is doing 'in the moment'. Take photos of the child and their friends engaging in different actions – talk about these at the time and re-visit the photos. Make toys, action figures carry out actions. Talk about what they're doing. Find actions in books – carry them out when possible.
Finding	Show me the... What made this noise...?	Finding matched objects during play Find pictures-objects to match when book sharing
Matching	Find one like this (point to an object) Show me another...	Picture/ object –sound matching e.g. vehicle or animal sounds Inset puzzles
Remembering an Object Name	What did you see on the table? Who did we see outside?	Kim's Game Posting Game – remember the item that was posted

Level Two (Describing)

Children at this level will be talking in short sentences and will be joining some ideas together into longer sentences. They are better able to describe and understand things. They will be starting to talk about things that happened away from the immediate environment and can talk about past/future events. Children at this level are beginning to understand more abstract language such as **concepts** and can think about words and their **meanings** and relate these now to other words they know.

How to help a child at this level -

- talk about properties of objects. Sort objects by features e.g. things that are soft, things that are red, things that are vehicles. This will also support the development of concept vocabulary.
- help children to experience new concept words e.g. touching things that are 'soft', standing 'far away'.
- school can use the **PORIC** checklist to identify appropriate concepts to focus on.
- talk about similarities and differences – help the child to make **connections** between words.
- hide objects and ask the child where they were to encourage positional language: in, on, under
- talk about what is happening in stories but don't worry about asking the child to re-tell the story. This will help develop vocabulary and language structures. Include talking about action words and emotions as these may be trickier for the child to notice and label.
- questions still need to relate to the '**here and now**' but they can start to answer and respond to instructions related to features of the objects they are engaged with such as shape, size, colour and texture.
- use visuals to support instructions and multi-step activities or to show children what possibilities there might be available in the play opportunity.

Developing Skill	Level 2 / Question Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Sentence completion	You cut paper with a Dog's love to eat....	Have a set of objects/ pictures. Give the start of a sentence and help the child to find the item that would complete the sentence.

Developing Skill	Level 2 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Function	<p>What do we eat?</p> <p>Can you give me something we write with?</p>	<p>Sorting</p> <p>Talk about the function of objects – sort objects by the same function – model the language related to the function e.g. sort everything you write with, eat, wear.</p> <p>Set out a collection of objects. Choose an object from the same ‘function’ group and model e.g. you drive a car, you drive a.....(help the child to find another thing we drive)</p> <p>Find me...</p> <p>Ask a child to find objects based on their function e.g. Find me something we eat, what do we drive, what do we colour with after you have worked through sorting together.</p>
Things together	<p>What goes with a fork?</p> <p>What goes with the cup?</p>	<p>What goes together?</p> <p>Collect pairs of objects that belong together. Talk about why they belong together</p> <p>Sort a set of objects into items that belong together.</p>
Sorting & Categorising Give an example	<p>What else can grow in the ground</p> <p>Name another plant (object in sight)</p>	<p>Categories</p> <p>Sort objects into categories –sort to very different categories to begin with e.g. vehicles and animals.</p> <p>As the child develops their sorting skills, you can narrow the difference e.g zoo animals and farm animals.</p> <p>Odd-one-out</p> <p>Set out a collection of 5 items- 4 items should belong together and 1 items should not. Help the child to find the object that doesn’t belong and talk about why.</p> <p>Start with very different categories and progress to making them more similar e.g. sort to animals versus food and progress to sorting fruit versus vegetables.</p>

Developing Skill	Level 2 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Linguistic concepts	Find a red car, Find a big pot,	See Concepts advice sheet
Describe a scene	What is happening? What's happening in the picture? Where is the....?	<p>Book/ Photo sharing</p> <p>You can use books or any visual materials of interest to your child for this – focus on the pictures rather than reading the story.</p> <p>Model the language needed to describe the scene first.</p> <p>Help the child to focus on parts of the scene by pointing to things they could notice.</p> <p>Model a sentence e.g. <i>this man is running up the hill, this man is...</i></p> <p>Pause to allow the child time to process what they have heard.</p>
Differences	What is difference about the fork and spade?	<p>Feely Bag</p> <p>Have an item from a category in front of you a selection of other items from the same group in the bag. Take turns to take something from the bag. Talk about what makes them the same and what makes them different. Help the child to notice what is different- pause to allow them to answer if they can e.g. <i>fork and spade. These are the same because you dig with both of them. They're different because the fork has spikes but the spade...</i></p> <p>Opposites</p> <p>Use picture resources to talk about opposites. Once the child is confident with sorting, choose a picture and ask them to find the opposite.</p>

Level Three (Re-Telling)

Children can now start to think about how other people might think/feel. They can predict and describe things. They can re-tell stories and events. Children at this level will start to be able to remember and process longer pieces of information. Children will be able to follow sets of instructions.

These strategies and activities below will help children practice answering questions that require them to use world knowledge and knowledge from their own experiences to make deductions, interpretations and group information together.

How to help a child at this level -

- make sure your child has listened to **all** of the information you wanted to share with them before responding to your instruction/ direction. Children will be developing their skills of listening to more information.
- **check** with your child that they have understood what they have to do – ask them to repeat what has been said or describe what they have to do.
- use **demonstrations** and **experiments** to develop your child's skills of predicting what will happen next. Children learn best if they can experience scenarios themselves.
- **relate** situations the child is familiar with to new situations/ scenarios e.g. our snowman melted when the sun came out. What will happen our ice cream if the sun comes out?
- use **meaningful sequences** to develop a child's sequencing and re-telling skills e.g. talk about the steps in starting a favourite game on a device, what steps there are in their favourite dance routine, how they get ready in the morning, how to build something from LEGO®. Take photos of the sequence to build into a 'story' for the child to re-tell.
- talk about what your child has been watching on TV or on their tablet/phone. **Connect** things into little sequences e.g. Spiderman climbed up the building and then he chased the monster and caught him. Then the police put him in their van.
- **pause** familiar programmes to ask your child what happens next or what do they think will happen next.
- **use** sequencing language when you're talking about what you've done e.g. I dropped you off at school and then I went shopping. After that I went to visit Nana.
- talk about **emotions** using familiar people, characters and celebrities.
- give **choices** for what might happen next as their predicting skills develop e.g. Do you think we will be going to lunch next or going home next?.

Developing Skill	Level 3 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Following a set of directions	Cut out the pictures, write your name on your page and the stick this onto the red box.	<p>Simon Says...</p> <p>Play Simon says games where you begin with one instruction and build this up to 2 and 3 instruction. Use picture/photo cards to support the child. Reduce their use once the child is confidently following 2 and 3 step instructions. Once the child is confident with the instructions, let them be 'teacher' – let them use the photo/picture cards to begin with and progress to them giving instructions without these.</p> <p>Classroom Helper</p> <p>Give your child purposeful instructions in school e.g go to the office and tell Mrs Brown we have 16 for lunch.</p> <p>Ask the child to tell you what they have to do before they carry out the instruction.</p> <p>Barrier Games</p> <p>Create play situations where two children or a child and adult have the same picture or objects and a barrier between them. Practise giving instructions to each other for how to arrange the objects or colour the picture.</p>
Give another example BUT listen to extra conditions		<p>What else?</p> <p>Use the Categories activity from Level 2. To step this up, ask the child to find something from the category but give them some more detail they have to listen for and notice e.g. find me an animal that lives in the zoo <u>and</u> swims in water.</p>
What characters say	What will the man say?	<p>Character Play</p> <p>Use character toys your child enjoys. Create scenarios with the character and ask what they would say e.g. Patrick has two burgers and SpongeBob's hungry. What could SpongeBob say to Patrick?</p>
How characters feel	How does the cat feel?	<p>Book sharing</p> <p>Notice emotions in familiar books. Talk about how characters are feeling and why. Relate these emotions to times when your child has shared this emotion or experienced the same situation e.g. The Owl Babies are worried because their Mummy isn't there. Remember when you couldn't find Daddy at the shop? You were worried when you couldn't see him.</p>

Developing Skill	Level 3 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Defining a word	What does subtract mean?	Use opportunities as they arise at home and school to define new words your child is learning e.g. what does measuring mean?
Sequencing	Can you put this story into the correct order?	Cut up story sequences or activity sequences familiar to the child. Support your child to arrange these into the correct order. Use language to support your child with sorting e.g. what happens at the start/ what do we do first, what happens next, what happens at the end?
Predicting	What will happen next?	<p>What happens next?</p> <p>Take photos of a meaningful sequence for the child e.g. a favourite classroom activity, building a model. Talk through the photos but leave the last picture. Ask the child to tell you what will happen next.</p> <p>Use stories – start with familiar stories the child may recall and progress to less familiar stories where the child has to use information from the pictures and story to predict what will happen next.</p> <p>Stop at key moments in the story and ask the child what will happen next. To help support this skill you can give options of what might happen next and draw the child's attention to information from the story that might help them to predict the next part.</p>
Narrative/re-telling events	Tell me what you did at the weekend?	<p>Use resources similar to those in the above 'What happens next?' activity to help your child re-tell longer pieces of information.</p> <p>In school, you could use your online home-school app to share photos of sequences from your child's day to share with important adults e.g. to share weekend news, to share about a school trip.</p>
Similarities	How are these the same?	Use any play/picture materials your child is interested in to talk about why things are the same e.g. how are stegosaurus and triceratops the same? Model answers/ use sentence completion to support your child with their answer e.g., they're the same because they both have.....'

Level 4 (Justifying)

Children at this level can now solve problems and explain things. They do not need to have all of the information in front of them to be able to problem solve. They can problem solve and make predictions at a more abstract level using their knowledge, understanding and experience of the world.

Children at this level can:

Predicting	What will happen if...?
Solutions	What should we do now? If you were the boy, what would you do now?
Causes	How did that happen?
Justifying	Why can't we ...eat soup with a knife and fork?
Explanations	How can we tell he is sad?
Explain the logic of compound words	Why is a snowball called a snowball?

How to help a child at this level -

- make sure your child has listened to **all** of the information you wanted to share with them before responding to your instruction/ direction.
- use **demonstrations** and **experiments** to develop your child's skills of predicting what will happen next. Children learn best if they can experience scenarios themselves.
- **model** language of problem solving. Help children to notice what will help them with trying problem-solving themselves.
- problem solve with the child from **their perspective** and then from **another's perspective** e.g. 'Why are you happy today?' 'It's Morgan's birthday today...why is he excited?'
- use **sentence completion** to help support a child with forming their answer e.g. Ask 'what will happen if the farmer forgets to close the gate? Then begin the answer 'If the farmer forgets to close the gate then.....(pause to allow the child to complete the answer).
- use **choices** to help model possible responses for a child e.g. How can we tell he is happy? Because he is holding an ice-cream or because he is smiling?
- use **opportunities** through a child's day to **explore** why they made decisions e.g. why did you need to sharpen your pencil, why did you chose not to wear your coat, why did you pick a ham sandwich for lunch.
- use **opportunities** as they arise to talk about **compound word** meanings e.g when picking lunch ask 'Why do we call these fish fingers?' , 'Why do we call these characters superheroes

Developing Skill	Level 4 Question / Instruction Types	Activity Ideas
Problem Solving Solutions	What should we do now?	Classroom Opportunities Notice opportunities through the day where you can encourage the child to problem solve e.g. ask them what they could do if there was no milk left for them at snack.
		Role Play/Small World Play Use play opportunities to problem solve from another's perspective e.g. the firefighter needs to rescue the cat, what could they do?
How characters feel	How can we tell the boy feels cross?	Book sharing Notice emotions in familiar books. Talk about how characters are feeling and how we can tell this. Emotions of others Notice how friends/ family members are feeling and ask the child if they can tell you why e.g. how do you know Michael is happy today?
Defining word	What does schoolbag mean?	Character Names Talk about favourite characters from books, games, films where their name relates to their character. Talk about why the child thinks that is their name e.g. Why is Spiderman called Spiderman, why is he called Supertato? Extend this to everyday items where the child will need to be able to break the word into its parts to help define it e.g. schoolbag, teaspoon, hand dryer.
Justifying (decision)	Why did pick this book to read?	Use opportunities for the child's day to ask them about choices they have just made e.g. why is this their favourite to play with, why did they pick this for their lunch?
Justifying (prediction)	Why do you think the tiger will eat all of Sophie's food?	Use books or pause programs to explore why your child thinks things might happen. Accept anything your child offers as a possible justification for something. If your child enjoys humour you could create some novel situations and talk about these e.g. why can't we wear our jumpers on our legs?

My Questions

This bookmark
belongs to

.....

Please ask me questions
like:

- What's this?
- Where's the?
- Find one like this.
- What did you see in the picture? (instant recall)
- What did you hear (instant recall)



1

My Questions

This bookmark
belongs to

.....

Please ask me questions like:

- Which one do we with?
(identify items by their function)
- Find another one like this
- What is different about
and? (identifying differences)
- Complete a sentence – e.g.
you put your shoes on your
.....?
- Who, what and where
questions after a given
statement
- What colour is ...?
- How many ...?
- Tell me something that is a
.... (category e.g. plant)



2

My Questions

This bookmark belongs to

.....

Please ask me questions like:

- How are ... and ... similar?
- Show me something that is not ... (select and object by exclusion)
- What does ... mean? (define meanings of words)
- What is ... thinking/feeling/saying (assume the role of someone else)
- Put the series of pictures into a sequence and relate a story to them
- Summarise a story into one sentence
- Plan and give a set of instructions e.g. 'tell me how to make a sandwich'
- Follow a set of instructions e.g. do this and then do that

3



My Questions

This bookmark belongs to

.....

Please ask me questions like:

- Why will ... happen? (justify a prediction)
- What made ... happen? (identify the cause)
- What could you do if ...? (solve a problem)
- What could Mam do if ...? (solve a problem from another's point of view)
- How can we tell that ...? (make an inference from an observation)
- Why is this called a E.g. carpark (explain the logic of compound words)
- What do we need to do to ... e.g. make a cup of tea? (explain means to a goal without objects in sight)
- Why can't we ...? (explain why something can't be done)

4



Concept Development

Concept words are less concrete than other types of words children will learn. This can make them **more difficult** to learn. Developing children's understanding and use of concepts will support general language development.

Concepts can relate to:

- time (today/tomorrow, now/next),
- position (next to/ behind/in front)
- size (big/little, thick/thin)
- description (big/little/rough/smooth, loud/quiet)
- quantity (many/few/some)
- emotions (happy/sad)

Children need to have a good **understanding** of concepts before they will start to use them.

Below are some **good practise** steps you can put in place that will support concept learning. Work through these in the order given:

1. Allow the child to **experience** the concept you are working on. Let the child explore objects with the attribute you are focussing on. Relate concept words directly to the child using a **multi-sensory** approach when possible e.g. create scenarios where they can feel 'big' or where they can be 'in front'. (**Personal**)
2. Relate the concept to **objects**. Allow the child to **explore** the concepts through toys and object play. (**Object**)
3. Relate the concepts to **picture material**. This might be a tricky step for some children as this is more abstract than using real life scenarios. To support this level, use **photos** from the previous steps e.g. take photos of the child in front of things and talk about these before finding things 'in front' of objects in picture materials. (**Relational**)
4. Create practical tasks where the child can begin to use the concept by themselves with reduced adult support. (**Independence**)
5. Allow for lots of **generalisation** and **consolidation** opportunities using different objects, people, places, picture materials. For some children, they will progress to reading and writing the written word for the concept at this stage. (**Consolidation**)

Personal → Object → Independence → Relational → Consolidation

- consider teaching concepts following a **developmental order**. A resource for this can be found in *Living Language* by Ann Locke (a brief overview is provided below). Check that earlier developing concepts are in place before introducing more difficult concepts. If the child is known to the Speech and Language Therapy team, check with their therapist for appropriate concept targets.

- only introduce a **maximum** of 4 concepts at a time. A child will need to work through all of the steps above to be fully confident with their new concept vocabulary. Introducing more than 4 new concepts will make this process more difficult to complete successfully.
- do not teach **opposites** at the same time. Teach the more obvious of the opposite pair and contrast this by using **not** e.g. the elephant is **big**, the mouse is **not big**. (Remember not everything that is not big is small).
- only move on to teaching the opposite word once the child is secure with **understanding** and **using** the target you have been working on.
- do not teach **superlatives** (biggest, smallest, fastest) and **comparatives** (e.g. bigger, smaller, faster) at the same time. Teach superlatives first and consolidate use of these before introducing comparatives later (e.g. teach big, then biggest, then bigger). Teaching in this order will allow for the **most difference** between the ideas to be demonstrated first while to child is still developing their concept knowledge and vocabulary.
- check that you are focussing on just **one** concept with the materials you are using e.g. *if all of the light things you use are also small*, will the child notice this or will 'small' and 'light' be understood interchangeably?
- some children may demonstrate a literal understanding of some concepts e.g. all elephants are big and could not be described as being small. In this situation, use alternative resources to target the concept you wish to focus on and work through the steps described above.
- when you notice interesting concepts in books, work through the '*Personal*' and '*Object*' levels to check for children's understanding.

Adapted from *PORIC. PORIC Concepts in developmental levels. Glinette Woods and Deborah Acors with Henrietta McLachlan. Available from <https://www.elklan.co.uk/Shop/PORIC>*

	Basic Concepts —————> Difficult Concepts			
Size	Big Little Heavy	Empty Fat Full Long Small	Biggest, large, light, short, tall, thin, bigger, fattest, heaviest, longest, smallest	Deep, narrow,, thick, heavier, longer, smaller, largest, lightest, shortest, tallest,
Space	In, On Under Off Out Up	In front, behind, near, next to, by, outside, top, over, through	Beside, backwards, back, between, far, front, high, low, middle, side, together,	above, across, against, apart, below, facing, sideways, upright
Texture	Hard Soft	Cold Dry Wet Hot	Furry Rough Smooth Warm	
Sound	Noisy Quiet/ly	Loud/ly Soft/ly		High Low
Shape	Dot Spot Line Round	Circle Flat Square	Cross Triangle	Corner, curved, diamond, oval, rectangle, shape, slant/ slope, straight
Movement	Fast Slow/ly	Moving Quick/ly Still		Jerky Smooth
Quantity	A bit All Lots Some More	Another Any Many No more As much as	About, both, every, few, half, most, nearly, only, other	Each, enough, equal, fewest, less, much, none, part, plenty, whole
Time	Again Now	After Soon Today	Always Before Later Yesterday	Early, late, never, once, sometimes, tomorrow, twice
Personal Qualities	Good Happy Naughty Sad	Bad Hungry Nice Pretty Silly	Cross Frightened Kind Thirsty	Clever Excited Pleased Unkind

Developing two word level understanding

Spoken instructions have key words or information carrying words in them that children have to understand and remember to be able to follow the instructions correctly. Some words do not carry information so it is not just the length of spoken sentence that is important.

When we give an instruction, we need to think about how many choices the child has for each of the words in the instruction. If there is a choice and the child could pick the wrong word then this word is an **information carrying word**. These words tell them what to do to be successful in following the instruction.

The words we use and the context of what is around the child will determine how many words the child needs to process to follow the instruction.

Example in shopping role play

No information carrying words (ICW)

The child is role playing being the shopkeeper but he just has apples in his shop. We ask 'Can I have an apple please?' There is no other choice for the child to listen for so this request has **0 ICW**.

One information carrying words (ICW)

This time the child has apples and bananas in his shop. We ask 'Can I have an apple please?'

*There is one other choice the child could pick from (apple or banana) so this time the request has **1ICW**.

*Notice that the length of the request stays exactly the same but it is now more difficult for the child to follow.

Two information carrying words (ICW)

Now the child has red and yellow apples and red and yellow bananas in his shop. We now ask 'Can I have a red banana please?' The child now has to listen for the colour (red or yellow) and the fruit (apple or banana). He has choices for each of these. This request has **2 ICWs**.

Children who are developing their understanding at 2 information carrying word level will benefit from strategies and activities that help them to focus on **all** of the information they need to notice to be able to follow an instructions successfully.

You may notice that the child can remember 1 information carrying word but not both when you start the activities.

Some useful **strategies** to use to support children with developing their **understanding** of 2 information carrying words:

- Make sure you have your child's **attention** before speaking to them. Your child may still be developing their attention skills as well.
- Try to keep requests and instructions to 1-2 ICWs.
- **Pause** after you have said something to give your child time to **process** what you have said.

- **Repeat** your request or instruction - do not add or change words if you are happy that it contains just 1-2 ICWs. Each time you change the words you use, the child will have to start processing these as new pieces of information.
- Use **pointing** or **actions** to help reinforce what you are saying
- If possible, **model** how to follow the requests or instructions before asking the child to. This will help them to **notice** the important words they need to tune into.
- Ask children to **tell** you what they are going to do before they start following an instruction so you can check for their understanding. Help them to notice any ICWs they have missed.

Activity ideas

Please change materials to reflect what your child is interested in. You could use character toys that they enjoy for example or move activities outside if your child enjoys outdoor play. Make sure the structure of the instructions remains the same and the same number of choices are available.

The activity ideas focus on different types of words. You may find your child is better able to follow some types of words than others.

Before you give your child some instructions to follow, say some instructions and follow them yourself so your child can see what to do.

If they find the instructions tricky to follow, give them support by handing them one of the items from the instructions. This will reduce the number of words they have to focus on. Aim to reduce this support as your child become more confident with the activity.

Take photos so you can talk about the activity again afterwards. This will help your child to hear the language again.

Dressing Up

You will need

- Use 3-4 toys that could 'wear something (e.g. doll, teddy, lion, Spiderman, SpongeBob, Iggle Piggle). You can also include you and the child.
- 5 items of child's clothing.

Give your child instructions saying what clothes to put on the child:

Put the hat on James. Put the socks on teddy. Put the t-shirt on Iggle Piggle

Action Play

You will need

- 2 toys that could do some actions (e.g doll, teddy, Batman)

Give your child instructions saying what the toys should do:

Make dolly jump. Make Batman fly. Make teddy sleep.

Sticker Play

You will need

- Adults or other children happy to have stickers put on them – use can use favourite toys too.
- Stickers

Give your child instructions saying where to put the stickers.

Put a sticker on Daddy's hand. Put a sticker on Molly's nose. Put a sticker on Peppa's tail.

Tidying Up

You will need

- Objects or items that need tidying-up or putting away.

Give your child instructions with 2 things they need to tidy or to give to:

Tidy up the ambulance and the fire engine. Give me the spoon and the plate.

Give me the socks and the t-shirt. Tidy the pig and the horse.

Hiding Game

You will need

- Objects that can be hidden – anything that your child will be motivated by
- A room or outdoor space where to hide the things

Give your child instructions saying where to hide the objects – you can give sensible and silly instructions.

Hide the spoon in the box. Hide teddy in the bath. Hide the tractor in the sand.

*Try to use just 'in' and 'on'. Other place words may be more tricky for your child to follow (e.g. behind, under, next to).

Tea Party Play

You will need

- Use 3-4 toys that could 'eat' something (e.g. doll, teddy, lion, Spiderman, SpongeBob, Iggle Piggle). You can also include you and the child.
- 5 food items – either toy food or real food.

Give your child instructions saying what the toys would like to eat:

Spiderman wants the banana. Mummy wants the hoops. Lion wants the biscuit.

Developing three word level understanding

Spoken instructions have key words or information carrying words in them that children have to understand and remember to be able to follow the instructions correctly. Some words do not carry information so it is not just the length of spoken sentence that is important.

When we give an instruction, we need to think about how many choices the child has for each of the words in the instruction. If there is a choice and the child could pick the wrong word then this word is an **information carrying word**. These words tell them what to do to be successful in following the instruction.

The words we use and the context of what is around the child will determine how many words the child needs to process to follow the instruction.

Example in shopping role play

No information carrying words (ICW)

The child is role playing being the shopkeeper but he just has apples in his shop. We ask 'Can I have an apple please?' There is no other choice for the child to listen for so this request has **0 ICW**.

One information carrying words (ICW)

This time the child has apples and bananas in his shop. We ask 'Can I have an apple please?'

*There is one other choice the child could pick from (apple or banana) so this time the request has **1ICW**.

*Notice that the length of the request stays exactly the same but it is now more difficult for the child to follow.

Two information carrying words (ICW)

Now the child has red and yellow apples and red and yellow bananas in his shop. We now ask Can I have a red banana please?' The child now has to listen for the **colour** (red or yellow) + the **fruit** (apple or banana) . He has choices for each of these. This request has **2 ICWs**.

Three information carrying words (ICW)

Now the child has big and small red apples and big and small yellow apples and big and small red bananas and big and small yellow bananas in his shop. We now ask Can I have a small red banana please?' The child now has to listen for the **size** (big or small) + **colour** (red or yellow) + the **fruit** (apple or banana). He has choices for each of these. This request has **3 ICWs**.

Children who are developing their understanding at 3 information carrying word level will benefit from strategies and activities that help them to focus on **all** of the information they need to notice to be able to follow an instructions successfully.

You may notice that the child can remember 2 information carrying word but not all 3 when you start the activities.

Some useful **strategies** to use to support children with developing their **understanding** of 3 information carrying words:

- Make sure you have your child's **attention** before speaking to them. Your child may still be developing their attention skills as well.
- Try to keep requests and instructions to 2-3 ICWs.
- **Pause** after you have said something to give your child time to **process** what you have said.
- **Repeat** your request or instruction - do not add or change words if you are happy that it contains just 2-3 ICWs. Each time you change the words you use, the child will have to start processing these as new pieces of information.
- Use **pointing** or **actions** to help reinforce what you are saying
- If possible, **model** how to follow the requests or instructions before asking the child to. This will help them to **notice** the important words they need to tune into.
- Ask children to **tell** you what they are going to do before they start following an instruction so you can check for their understanding. Help them to notice any ICWs they have missed.

Activity ideas

Please change materials to reflect what your child is interested in. You could use character toys that they enjoy for example or move activities outside if your child enjoys outdoor play. Make sure the structure of the instructions remains the same and the same number of choices are available.

The activity ideas focus on different types of words. You may find your child is better able to follow some types of words than others.

Before you give your child some instructions to follow, say some instructions and follow them yourself so your child can see what to do.

If they find the instructions tricky to follow, give them support by handing them one of the items from the instructions. This will reduce the number of words they have to focus on. Aim to reduce this support as your child become more confident with the activity.

Shopping Game

You will need

- 10 items of real or toy food – include anything else the child would like in their 'shop'
- A basket/ bag for the 'shopping'

Give your child a list of 3 things you would like:

Please can I have the **banana**, **ice cream** and **car**.

Please can I have the **dog**, the **beans** and the **apple**.

Make sure the child listens to the full list before they start giving you items.

Colouring

You will need

- 2 colouring pictures with similar items for example 2 different animals, 2 different characters
- Colouring pens, pencils or crayons

Give your child instructions saying what to colour in and the colour they should use:

Colour unicorn's tail pink. Colour the cat's nose yellow. Colour Batman's legs blue.

Action Play

You will need

- 3 toys that could do some actions (e.g doll, teddy, Batman)

Give your child instructions saying what the toys should do:

Make dolly jump on the bed. Make Batman fly to the chair. Make teddy sleep on the car.

Hiding Game

You will need

- Objects that can be hidden – anything that your child will be motivated by
- A room or outdoor space where to hide the things

Give your child instructions saying where to hide 2 of the objects – you can give sensible and silly instructions. You can give instructions with in, on and under place words.

Hide the spoon and the cup in the box. Hide Thomas and Percy in the bath.
Hide the tractor and digger in the sand. Hide the t-rex and the triceratops in the grass.

Big and Little Sticker Play

You will need

- Big and little animals or character toys
- Stickers

Give your child instructions saying where to put the stickers.

Put a sticker on the big cow's nose. Put a sticker on little Spiderman's and tummy.

Tidying Up

You will need

- Objects or items that need tidying-up or putting away.

Give your child instructions with 3 things they need to tidy or to give to:

Tidy up the ambulance, the car and the tractor. Give me the spoon, the plate and the cup.

Developing understanding and use of prepositions

Prepositions are words that tell us where something is.

Children usually learn to understand and use prepositions in the following order:

Level 1: in/on

Level 2: under

Level 2: behind/ in front

Level 3: next to/ beside/ between

The aim of these activities is to help children to develop their **understanding** of their position words first. When working through the activities, the adults will always give the instructions/ make the comments **first**. Once the child can understand the position words reliably, they can then be encouraged to use the words.

Some useful strategies to use to support children with learning and using prepositions:

- use activities the child will **enjoy** – children will be more engaged if they enjoy the activity, They are also more likely to want to play the game or do the activity with you again.
- make sure children can **experience** the position words where possible.
- **repeat** the activities many times – lots of repetitions will help your child to build links between the preposition words you use and where the objects are.
- **pause** after you have modelled and repeated the phrase. Count to 10 before saying something else. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together and maybe copy what you have said.
- **don't** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.

Routines

If your child likes to help you with things around the house or in your setting, give them little instructions using **position** words. Start by **modelling** the language as you carry out the actions then give the child some things to do by themselves:

Put your spoon **on** the table.

Put the animals **in** the box.

Push the chair **under** the table.

Put your book **in** your bag.

Let's put the shopping **in** the fridge.

Book Sharing

Share favourite books with your child. Help your child to **notice** where objects and characters are in the pictures. **Model** position words from the list above when you make comments about what you are looking at. **Point** to the things you are talking about to help your child link together what you are saying and what they are looking at.

You can also do this with **sticker scene** or **magnet books** where the child could move characters and objects into different positions for you to comment on.

Hiding Game (with objects)

Collect a set of objects e.g. cars, toy animals, dinosaurs. Hide the objects around the room or outside. Ask your child to find them. **Model** the answer for where they were hiding. Make sure to be **alongside** your child as they find the items so you can model the sentence whilst showing where the object was. Take photos so you can talk about these afterwards.

Level 1

Place all of the objects either **on** something or **in** something or **under** something e.g. 'on sofa', 'on chair', 'on TV'. This will be easier for your child because they will hear the same position/ place word each time. Repeating the same pattern will help the child to notice the important words.

Level 2

Hide objects anywhere so there may be a mixture of sentences with **in**, **on** and **under** in them e.g. on the table, in the box, under the shoe.

Level 3

Set objects **behind** or **in front** of things. You can also include **in**, **on** and **under**.

Level 4

Set objects **beside**, **next to** or **between** things. You can also include **behind**, **in front**, **in**, **on** and **under**.

If your child enjoys playing with these objects, ask them to hide the objects – give them instructions working through the levels. If your child places the objects incorrectly, tell them where the toy is and help your child to move them to the correct place – emphasise the place word they need to notice e.g. you've put teddy on the table, teddy needs to be **under** the table (help your child to move teddy under the table).

Hiding Game (with people)

Play a game of Hide and Seek. Make comments about where you and the child were hiding. Make sure to use a place word e.g. you were in the box, under the table, behind the curtains.

The next step is to give your child a hiding instruction.

Using the ideas described above, play a game where you and the child '**hide**'. Tell the child where to 'hide'. If they find this tricky, you can hide with them to begin with. Once they are in the correct place, take a **photo** on your phone/ tablet so the child can see where they were. Tell them where they were. **Pause** after you have made the comment to allow them the opportunity to copy what you said.

This will let your child physically and visually **experience** the place words and will help them to build links between the place words and where they were.

Once your child becomes confident with this activity, they could be teacher and tell you where to hide.

Make sure to look back at all of the photos you took so you can use all of the place words again with your child.

Simon says....

If your child enjoys **moving around**, you can play a 'Simon says...' game outside:

Level 1 : Simon says.....jump **on** the grass, hide **in** the trees

Level 2: Simon says.....hide **under** the slide

Level 3: Simon says.....run **behind** the climbing frame, stand **in front of** the rock

Level 4: Simon says.....stand **between** the swings

Make sure to **take photos** of your child so you can talk about these again in the moment and afterwards. This will give your child lots of **opportunities** to hear and possibly use the position words when you are talking about the photos.

Developing understanding of negatives

(no, not, n't)

Helping children to understand *negatives* or *negation* is a common difficulty in early child language development. Children can find this tricky to both understand and use. Typically we focus on supporting a child's understanding of this first.

There are many different versions of negatives your child will be developing their understanding of. Some may be easier for your child than others.

Negative + action word	not running, can't jump, isn't sleeping
Negative + describing word	not happy, not blue, not hungry, isn't small
Negative + object word	no eyes, no money, hasn't got any wheels, no shoes
Negative + possession	not my, isn't my, not yours, not Molly's

The aim of these recommendations and activities is to help your child **hear** lots models of negatives being used in everyday routines and activities. We can also use familiar toys, books and play opportunities.

Some useful strategies to use to support children developing their use of single understanding of negatives:

- use **natural gesture** in your voice to support what you say. You can add in a head shake to show no/not. This added **visual** cues can help children to notice the important piece of information more easily. They may copy this head shake in the future when they attempt to use negatives themselves.
- **add a commentary** to your day where you use negatives – 'this one doesn't fit, that's not my shoe, we have no milk left, its not raining.
- **contrast** with the positive when possible e.g. that's not my shoe....that's my shoe, this tractor hasn't got any wheels but this one *does* have wheels.
- **pause** after you have modelled a phrase. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together.
- **don't** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.
- **acknowledge** any attempts your child makes to use negatives in their talking. Model this back to them so they can hear the correct form of the negative but **don't correct** them or ask them to copy you. Your child might say 'them no my shoes' and you could say 'oh, they're not your shoes'.

Below are some activity suggestions and ideas modelling negatives, These have all been described for using with toys but use family members of classmates if this will be more motivating or meaningful for your child.

Dress Up Play

You will need:

- **Toys and clothes to put on them**

Put an item of clothing on one of the toys.

Ask the child to find which toy 'has not got a on' e.g. Who has **not** got a sock on?

To begin with, you can talk through all of the toys and comment who has the clothing item on and who doesn't have it on. As you repeat the activity, reduce your comments about the toys.

Support by shaking your head when you give the instruction. Withdraw this cue when possible.

That's Not My.... (Book series)

You will need:

- **Books from Usborne's 'That's not my....' collection**

Share these books with your child.

Use lots of expression in your voice and head shakes to show the negative 'not'.

Tea Party Play

You will need:

- **Toys – favourite animals or character toys – maximum of four**
- **Real or toy food**

Give an item of food to one of the toys.

Ask the child to find which toy/toys 'have not got a on' e.g. Who has **not** got a banana?

To begin with, you can talk through all of the toys and comment who has the food and who doesn't have it. As you repeat the activity reduce your comments about the toys.

Support by shaking your head when you give the instruction. Withdraw this cue when possible.

To make this harder, give different items of food to all of the toys and ask your child to find the toys that don't have a specific food e.g. Who **doesn't** have the apple?

Action Play

You will need:

Character toys (2-3)

Ask your child to close their eyes or turn away. Make one of the toys do an action (lie down, run around, hop) Ask your child to find the toys not doing the action e.g. Who is not running?

Thinking About Friends

You will need:

- **A group of children – classroom friends or family members.**

Talk about features your child can observe in their friends or family members:

Who has not got blue eyes?

Who has not got red shoes on?

To make it harder, talk about things they can't see but will know:

Who doesn't live in this house?

Who doesn't like ice-cream?

Who doesn't like brushing their teeth?

Opposites

You will need:

- **Books or puzzles with 'opposites'**

Pick one of the opposite words and then find things that are 'not' that word e.g. which ones are not tall, which ones are not soft.

Developing understanding of single words

Children who have not yet developed an understanding of single words may find it tricky to follow instructions that you give them.

Children at this early stage of language development will benefit from strategies that help them to understand what is being said to them.

These strategies will help them to know what to do while they are still developing their understanding skills.

These strategies will help them to build **connections** between the words that you say and the object or action you are talking about. This will develop their understanding of language.

Some useful **strategies** to use to support children with **understanding** single words:

- make sure you have your child's **attention** before speaking to them. Your child may still be developing their attention skills as well.
- keep your language really **short** and **simple**. Use just 1-2 words if possible. This will help your child to **notice** the important words.
- **pause** after you have said something to give your child time to **process** what you have said.
- **repeat** the same single word or 2 words together so the child can notice this again.
- use **pointing** or **actions** to help reinforce what you are saying. If you know Makaton or other signs then use these as well as the spoken words.
- show your child objects related to what you are talking about e.g. show them their cup for snack time (see **Objects of Reference** handout)
- **notice** what your child is interested in or an action they are doing and make a one word comment related to this. This will help them to link words to things they are interested in and likely to notice again.
- give **choices** through their day e.g. *Do you want milk or juice? Do you want Paw Patrol or Blaze?* This will help them to notice words related to parts of their day.

Routines

Add short **simple comments** to routines in your day. **Repeat** these often as you work through the routine. Children will start to link the language you use with the step of the routine you are on. The more you repeat these steps and add the language to it the more your child will be able to predict the language that will be coming up in the routine.

Remember to **pause** after you have made a comment to allow your child to process what you've said and link it to the routine.

Getting Dressed	Snack Time	Bubble Play
Socks on	Juice	Want bubbles
Pants on	Eating apple	More
Hands up	Yummy apple	Pop pop pop
All ready	All done	All gone

Feely Bag

Place 4-5 objects into a bag or a box. Use objects your child will be familiar with such as a spoon, sock, key, teddy.

Take turns to take something out. Allow your child to **explore** the object so they can use their senses to notice how it looks and feels. **Name** the object as your child explores. Repeat this label.

Use the word in a short sentence as your child explores e.g. eat with spoon, shiny spoon, cuddle teddy, teddy's soft. Try to make at least 3 comments. This will give your child lots of opportunity to hear the word and relate it to what they are doing.

Once you have explored all of the items, take 2 objects from the bag and hold them in front of your child. Hold one item in each hand. Ask them to find one of the items.

If they choose the item you name, praise them and say the word again. e.g. yeh, you found teddy, here's teddy'. This will let them hear the word again.

If they pick the other item, hold the item you asked them to find closer to the child and name it again e.g. here's the ball, we found the ball.

Book Sharing

Share favourite books with your child. **Notice** what they are looking at or pointing to and add a simple label to this. Remember to add an action or sign as well if you can.

Sharing the same books many times will help your child to build these **connections** between the pictures and words.

Puzzles

If your child enjoys doing puzzles, **label** what is on the puzzle piece as your child is holding and exploring it. To begin with, the focus is on letting your child hear the words for the pictures many times.

You can turn this into a feely bag activity described above.

If they will let you, set two of the puzzle pieces in front of your child and ask them to find one to add to the puzzle. Repeat until the puzzle is complete.

Photo Sharing

Look at photos of family and friends. Talk about who is in the photos and a simple comment about what is happening. Ask your child to find important people to them in the photos.

Share the same photos often.

In early years settings, try to have photos available at child height for children to notice and share with you. Talk about their friends in the photos. Ask them to find a friend in the photos.

Posting /Filling

Have two pictures or objects in front of the child. Ask them to post one of them or add one of them to a box.

Once they can confidently complete this with a choice of two items add in another item so they have three items to choose from.

Simon says.....

To help develop an understanding of action words, play a simple 'Simon says...' game.

To begin with use photos to show the actions the child needs to do e.g. Simon says jump.

As your child becomes more confident with this, gradually reduce the use of photos. If they forget the action you asked them to do, show them the photo again to reinforce the language.

To develop this, you could ask them to carry out actions on toys e.g. *make Spiderman sleep, make Woody walk.*

Following Instructions

Children may find following instructions difficult for a number of reasons:

- difficulty paying **attention** to the person giving the instruction
- difficulty **understanding** the words in the instruction
- difficulty **remembering** everything that was said in the instruction
- difficulty **organising** themselves and the resources needed follow the instruction

Strategies to support children with following instructions.

- **minimise** noise and distractions before you give an instruction. For some children it can be tricky to notice what the important noise or voice is they need to be paying attention to.
- use the **child's name** before giving them an instruction.
- **do not** insist on eye contact as you give the instruction. Some children can pay attention better when they are not looking directly at the adult.
- **repeat** whole class/group instructions **directly** to the child. Some children do not recognise that whole class instructions or inductions given to a group (e.g. Penguins, the Red Group) are for them too.
- keep instructions **short**. Give your child just **one** instruction to complete at a time.
- be **specific**. Describe what the child **needs to do** e.g. Say '*Morgan put your book in your bag*' rather than '*Morgan get ready for home*'. This second instruction doesn't tell the child exactly what they need to do.
- add a **visual** cue to support your instruction *e.g point to what the child will need to do*.
- **pause** after you give an instruction to allow the child to process the information – don't continue to repeat or change the instruction.
- **check** your child has **understood** what you have asked them to do. Ask them to tell you or show you what they're going to do. This will also help them rehearse the instruction again and aid them in remembering.

Activity ideas

For each of these activity suggestions, start with one item for the child to remember. Once they are reliably following instructions with one item add in another. Always ask them to tell you what they are going to do before they start.

Daily Activities	
Getting dressed	Tell your child what item(s) of clothing to put on next. Have their clothes set out. Ask them to point or tell you what they're going to do before they put the item on.
Shopping	Tell your child what item(s) they need to find and put in your basket/trolley.
Mealtimes	Give your child directions for setting the table or tidying up e.g. ' <i>Please put the cups on the table</i> ', ' <i>Please put the cups and the spoons on the table</i> '.
Classroom Jobs	Give the child a simple 'job' to do e.g. ' <i>Please tell Mrs Miller there are 6 children for snack today</i> '

Play	
Simon says.....	Give your child a simple instruction to follow with one action e.g. touch your toes. Add in another instruction when one instruction is too easy.
Favourite play activities	<p>Lego</p> <p>Ask your child to find you a certain block. Increase the number for them to find.</p> <p>Play-Doh</p> <p>Ask you child to make you something e.g. '<i>Please make me a star</i>'. Add in another thing for them to make if this is too easy.</p>
Colouring	Tell you child what to colour in. You can make this harder by increasing the number of things to colour or adding in the colour to use e.g. ' <i>colour the cat</i> ' (easier), ' <i>colour the cat yellow</i> ' (harder)

Book Sharing	
As you share books with your child, ask them to find things in the picture. You can make this easier or harder with the kevel of detail you give e.g. <i>can you find a dog (easier)</i> , <i>can you find the dog hiding behind the car (harder)</i> .	

Following your child's lead

What is connection with others?

For children at an early stage of communication, connection with others relates to their experience of meaningful communication exchanges with adults and other children.

Both the child and those engaging with the child may use a range of communication methods to connect.

Connection can happen without spoken language. Communication could be through body language, touch, tone of voice or gestures for example.

Why is connection with others important?

For some children at an early stage of communication, building connection with people around them is an important building block to support and nurture further communication development.

It is important for people supporting early communicators to recognise, understand and respond to every form of communication the child uses.

How might my child be communicating?

Children may be able to share their ideas, needs, wants, mood and personality with you through many ways that do not necessarily involve the using words. Early communicators may use:

- sounds/ vocalisations/ intonation
- body language
- facial expression
- symbols/ objects
- signs
- gestures
- hand leading
- pointing
- crying/ laughing
- repeating noises/words/phrases

Key Strategies to support early communicators

Accepting all forms of communication

It is important to accept and honour your child's preferred way to communicate just now. Value every attempt they make to communicate with you.

Why this helps

Your child will experience success at communicating with you. This will encourage them to communicate their ideas, wants, needs to you again. Having lots of opportunities to enjoy these interactions with you will support the development of their communication skills.

For some children, having their communication efforts responded to by adults will reduce frustration levels.

Follow your child's lead

Notice what your child is interested in in the moment. Observe how they are exploring or playing with the object, toy, their body, their voice. Take a few minutes to do this. They may not use the toys or objects as you would expect them to. This is ok. They are exploring and learning.

Try to notice what they are focussing on – is it the movement of something, the texture, the sound of something?

Join your child by sitting/ lying/ crouching next to them – try to match their physical level.

Try not to direct they play. Copy what they are doing.

Make comments about what they are doing or noticing.

Make sure that there are lots of opportunities for children to be able to access the things that are motivating for them.

Why this helps

This helps children to know we value their play and are interested in what they are doing. This will support children with trusting us and encourage them to build connections with us. From these connections we can support communication.

When we make comments or use additional actions or sounds related to what a child is interested in, they are more likely to notice and respond to these.

Do not focus on eye contact

Do not encourage your child to look directly at you if this is difficult or uncomfortable for them.

Why this helps

Making direct eye contact can be uncomfortable for some children and is not an essential part of building connections.

Children do not need to make eye contact to communicate with us. Children may look towards you or make fleeting eye contact to show they are giving their attention to you.

Use short comments

Make short comments as your child is exploring, playing, taking part in daily routines. Make comments related to what they are seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling. Try to pause for at least 5 seconds after you have said something. Try to reduce the number of questions you ask your child.

Why this helps

Making comments related to what your child is interested in shows them that you have noticed what is important to them. Pausing allow your child time to notice and process what you have said. Questions can often be difficult for children to answer and often they cannot respond to them. For early communicators, questions do not always support communication development.

Support your spoken words with additional forms of communication

Add in gestures or signs, use objects to convey your meaning, use more facial expression or intonation to share excitement or build anticipation for example.

Why this helps

Children may not always understand the words that we say. When we add in extra visual information or change how we say words to add excitement, this will help children to notice more of what we are sharing with them. An example of this is when we might say 'weeeee' as your child goes down a slide or on a roundabout to show excitement and enjoyment. Early communicators respond to adults using lots of intonation when they talk.

Helping children understand and use past and future tense

Past tense verbs are action words that help us to know something happened in the past.

There are 2 main types of past tenses:

Regular All regular past tense words will have ‘-ed’ added so *walk-walked*

Irregular All irregular past tense words change so *eat-ate, swim-swam, go-went*

As children begin to use past tenses they may make some errors. We may hear children using and regular ‘ed’ ending for irregular past tense words to say ‘*runned*’ instead of ‘*ran*’ for example.

Some children may use the correct irregular version of the word and **also** add an ‘ed’ ending so they may say ‘*ranned*’ for ran. These are quite typical errors for early language learners.

These all show your child is noticing the past tense versions of the words and are experimenting with figuring out how to use them in their talking.

Future tense verbs are the version of action words that tell us something will happen so *go-‘will go’, drive-‘going to drive’*. These can be more difficult to learn as there are different ways we can talk about future events (see examples below).

Children usually learn to talk about the ‘past’ before they will talk about the ‘future’. It may be easier for them to talk about something they have already **experienced** rather than something **yet to happen**.

Strategies to support children with understanding and using past and future tenses

- add a **commentary** to what you are doing or what your child is engaging with. Notice opportunities for using past tense words ‘*I dropped the ball*’, ‘*the car fell*’, ‘*you’ve washed your hands*’.
- **model** correct versions of past or future tenses when you notice your child attempting to use them. Don’t ask them to copy you.
- **repeat** the correct version 2-3 times to allow them to hear it in context ‘*Oh dear, you fell down....you fell down*’.
- **pause** after you have made a comment to allow your child time to process what you have said. In this space they may then use the past or future words themselves.

Activities

Book/Screen Sharing

Past tense

Talk about 'What happened?'

Ask this for the page or scene you are on so the information is still present for the child to refer to.

Move on to asking about it for the previous page or the previous part of the TV show/ cartoon. This time your child will have to remember for longer what happened.

It is easier for children to retell something that has just happened rather than something that happened a while ago.

Talk about what happened in the book/ programme once the child is very familiar with it. This will create more opportunities for you to model and your child to hear and use past tense words.

Future Tense

Using the same books or programmes, progress to asking your child '*What's going to happen?*'

Model lots of future tense actions words as they generate ideas or retell the sequence

Classroom Helper

Past Tense

After the child has completed something you have asked them to do, ask them to tell you what they did. This may be a more genuine question to ask if you were not the adult who gave the instruction.

Future Tense

Give the child an instruction and before they set off to complete this, ask them what they're going to do – this will help you to check their understanding and create an opportunity to model future tense: 'That's right, you're going to tell Mrs Miller there are 10 children for lunch today.'

Painting/ Colouring/ Drawing

Past Tense

Ask the child to tell you what they have coloured in or painted in their picture. Model some sentences for them to begin with if necessary: 'You drew a cat here', 'You coloured the snowman in red'. 'What else have you drawn?'

Future Tense

Before the child starts to draw/ colour, ask them what they're going to need, what they're going to draw/colour. You could join the child at the activity and model future tenses as you paint/draw/colour your own picture: 'I'm going to draw a house', 'I'm going to colour in the dog's tail'.

Daily Sequences

Past Tense

Create photo sequences on your phone or tablet of things your child is doing. For example you may have photos of your child going to the park, on different pieces of play items in the park and then walking home past the shops. Share these with your child. Add a commentary to the photo sequence you have. You will have lots of opportunities to use words in the past:

'We walked to the park and then you went in the swings. You finished on the swing and you went to jump on the trampoline and your friend came too. When you got tired jumping you played on the slide for a bit. We finished at the park and then you wanted to go to the shops. You chose some sweets at the shop and then we came home.

Future Tense

Ask you child about what is happening tomorrow or what they would like to do next or do tomorrow. You can give choices to model language they might want to use.

Do you want to go see Nana next or go to the park? Who are we going to see now?

Are we going on holiday tomorrow or staying at home?

Joining Two Words Together

The aim of these recommendations and activities is to help the child hear lots of combinations of 2 words together. It may take them a little time before they start to use the words together themselves. They will need to hear adults model these word combinations first.

Some useful strategies to use to support children moving from using single words to joining 2 words together:

- **match-and-stretch** – this is a strategy where adults **match** what the child has said and **stretch** it by adding a word e.g. the child might say ‘car’ and the adult would match this and stretch it by adding a word such as ‘yes, a red car’ or ‘ooh, car crashed’.
- **repeat** the new phrase 3-4 times e.g. ‘yes, a red car, I like your red car, the red car is fast, bye bye red car’.
- **pause** after you have modelled and repeated the new phrase. Count to 10 before saying something else. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together and maybe copy what you have said.
- **don’t** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.

Below are some activity suggestions. You can amend the activities to fit with the vocabulary you are focusing on.

It is important that you focus on **modelling** the 2 words together **many times** in the activities so the child can tune into these being the important words.

If the child is not yet using *at least* 50 single words reliably when they are talking, use the recommendations for **Early Words**.

Your child may not yet use all of the **little** words such as ‘is’, ‘are’ and ‘the’. You can say them when you **model** the language but don’t worry if your child does not yet use them.

Important words to use in you language models are

Place words (prepositions) – in, on

Action words (verbs) – running, eating, sleeping, catching

People (possessives) – Daddy’s, teddy’s, dog’s

Hiding Game

Collect a set of objects e.g. cars, toy animals, dinosaurs. Hide the objects around the room or outside. Ask your child to find them. Model the answer for where they were hiding.

Level 1

Place all of the objects either **on** something or **in** something or **under** something e.g. 'on sofa', 'on chair', 'on TV'. This will be easier for your child because they will hear the same position/ place word each time. Repeating the same pattern will help the child to notice the important words.

Level 2

Hide objects anywhere so there may be a mixture of sentences with in, and on in them
e.g. on the table, in the box.

Laundry Game

If your child enjoys helping you with the laundry make a game of this with them. Make simple repetitive comments about the clothes. You can focus on action words and describing words with this activity. As with the Hiding Game. You can repeat the same sentences or types of sentence many times as you play.

Action words	People Words
Hanging the dress Matching socks Folding t-shirt	Daddy's socks Tommy's trousers Ollie's coat

Everyday Activities

Add a simple commentary during activities which you do everyday at home and in class

Tidying up	cleaning the table	books in the box
P.E	jumping on mat	rolling the ball
Home corner	making a cup of tea	dolly eating
Getting dressed	socks on	shoes on

Book Sharing

Look at pictures in books together where the characters are **doing** things. Help your child to notice something and model 3 words together.

Follow the pattern of character + action. Examples below.

This is an early type of sentence and will support your child with later language learning.

Character/ name	Action
Caterpillar	is eating
Pip	is baking
The spider	is spinning

Photo Sharing

If your child enjoys looking at photos of themselves, family or friends, share photos with them where you talk about what the people **are doing**. Follow the examples above:

Person	Action
Morgan	is kicking
The ducks	are eating
Grandma	is reading
Mummy	is splashing
Daddy	is riding

Sticker Scene Books

If you have any books with removable stickers or magnets you can use these to describe where things are e.g. on roof, on tractor, in the field. Your child might enjoy putting things in funny places and hearing you model the language for this e.g. the cat is driving.

Joining Three Words Together

The aim of these recommendations and activities is to help the child hear lots of combinations of 3 words together. It may take them a little time before they start to use the words together themselves. They will need to hear adults model these word combinations first.

Some useful strategies to use to support children moving from using 2 words together to 3 words together:

- **match-and-stretch** – this is a strategy where adults **match** what the child has said and **stretch** it by adding a word e.g. the child might say ‘red car’ and the adult would match this and stretch it by adding a word such as ‘yes, a big red car’ or ‘ooh, the red car crashed’.
- **repeat** the new phrase 3-4 times e.g. ‘yes, a big red car, I like your big red car, the big red car is fast, bye bye big red car’.
- **pause** after you have modelled and repeated the new phrase. Count to 10 before saying something else. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together and maybe copy what you have said.
- **don’t** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.

Below are some activity suggestions. You can amend the activities to fit with the vocabulary you are focusing on.

It is important that you focus on **modelling** the 3 words together **many times** in the activities so the child can tune into these being the important words. Remember to pause after you have modelled a phrase. These are new language ideas your child will be learning to use so they will need time to connect ideas and words together before saying the,.

If the child is not yet using two word words together, use the recommendations from **Joining Two Words Together** handout.

Your child may not yet use all of the **little** words such as ‘is’, ‘are’ and ‘the’. You can say them when you **model** the language but don’t worry if your child does not yet use them.

Important words to be using in you language models are

Place words (prepositions) – in, on, under

Describing words (adjectives) – big, shiny, spikey, noisy

Action words (verbs) – running, eating, sleeping, catching

Hiding Game

Collect a set of objects e.g. cars, toy animals, dinosaurs. Hide the objects around the room or outside. Ask your child to find them. Model the answer for where they were hiding.

Level 1

Place all of the objects either **on** something or **in** something or **under** something e.g. 'dinosaur on sofa', 'dinosaur on chair', 'dinosaur on TV'. This will be easier for your child because they will hear the same position/ place word each time. Repeating the same pattern will help the child to notice the important words.

Level 2

Hide objects anywhere so there may be a mixture of sentences with in, on and under in them, e.g. under the bed, on the table, in the box.

Laundry Game

If your child enjoys helping you with the laundry make a game of this with them. Make simple repetitive comments about the clothes. You can focus on action words and describing words with this activity. As with the Hiding Game. You can repeat the same sentences or types of sentence many times as you play.

Action words	Describing Words
Hanging Mummy's dress	Socks smell nice
Matching Molly's socks	Daddy's trousers are dirty
Folding Daddy's t-shirt	Ollie's coat is clean

Book Sharing

Look at pictures in books together where the characters are **doing** things. Help your child to notice something and model 3 words together.

Follow the pattern of character + action + object. Examples below.

This is an early type of sentence and will support your child with later language learning.

Character/ name	Action	Object / thing
Caterpillar	is eating	the leaf
The spider	is spinning	a web
The tiger	is eating	all of the food

Everyday Activities

Add a simple commentary during activities which you do everyday at home and in class

Tidying up	cleaning the table	books in the box
P.E	jumping on mat	roll big ball
Home corner	making a cup of tea	dolly eating dinner
Getting dressed	Mummy putting socks on	Tommy putting shoes on

Photo Sharing

If your child enjoys looking at photos of themselves, family or friends, share photos with them where you talk about what the people **are doing**. Follow the examples above:

Person	Action	Object / thing
Morgan	is kicking	the ball
The ducks	are eating	the bread
Grandma	is reading	the book
Mummy	is splashing	Freddie
Daddy	is riding	his motorbike

Sticker Scene Books

If you have any books with removable stickers or magnets you can use these to describe where things are e.g. cat on roof, Bob on tractor, cows in the field. Your child might enjoy putting things in funny places and hearing you model the language for this e.g. the cat is driving the car.

Mirroring

What is connection with others?

For our children at an early stage of communication, connection with others relates to their experience of meaningful communication exchanges with adults and other children.

Both the child and those engaging with the child may use a range of communication methods to connect.

Connection can happen without spoken language. Communication could be through body language, touch, tone of voice or gestures for example.

We can use **opportunities** as your child **explores** and **plays** to build connections with them.

Why is connection with others important?

For some children at an early stage of communication, building connection with people around them is an important building block to support and nurture further communication and interaction development.

It is important for people supporting early communicators to recognise, understand and respond to every form of communication the child uses.

What is mirroring?

Mirroring is when an adult **copies** the **actions**, **play**, **sounds** and/or **words** of a child. This helps the child to develop an awareness of others around them and often encourages communication.

The adult allows the child to **take the lead** in the interaction. The adult simply notices what the child is doing and **copies** this. The aim is to develop early back and forth interactions with your child.

How does mirroring help develop connection?

By mirroring what the child is doing, you are showing them that you are **interested** and noticing what is important to them. By allowing them to lead the interaction, the child can **enjoy** the moment without any worry that the adult is going to try to interrupt or change what they are doing.

This will create **natural opportunities** for the child to use and develop some early communication skills including:

- noticing another person
- looking towards another person
- early back and forth interactions
- anticipating what might happen next

How to introduce mirroring

Take some time to notice what your child is exploring or playing with. Notice how they are moving, what vocalisations they are making, how they are exploring the object or toy.

Join your child. Aim to get as close to your child as possible for the mirroring activity. You may need to start the activity a little further away and gradually move closer.

If your child is enjoying physical movement then copy their actions. Wait and notice what they do next and copy this.

If your child is playing with or exploring objects or toys then collect the same items or as close as you can match them for yourself and sit/lie alongside your child.

Copy what they are doing using your own toys/objects e.g. banging the objects, spinning wheels, counting, building a tower. These are all meaningful for the child. We want to show them this is important by noticing and copying them. Try to keep this going for a few minutes.

How do I develop this further?

As your child begins to trust that you are not there to interrupt their play, you may be able to move mirroring on. Work **very gradually** through these steps:

- continue to have matched toys/objects. Try to build turn-taking sequences with your child where they do something with their toys/objects and then pause while you copy with yours. This will let you know that they have started to notice you more. This will support early back and forth exchanges.
- pause before you copy them again. Notice if they indicate that they want you to keep playing – they may look towards you, gesture, vocalise.
- next, you can try to swap one of your items for one of theirs. Aim to progress to then taking a turn with this 'new' toy/object. You may need to then return the toy/object after you have taken a turn.
- gradually build the number of turns you can have with this new toy.
- progress to subtly changing the play with your toy. Your child may or may not copy you.

Objects of Reference

What are Objects of Reference?

Objects of Reference (OOR) are objects that are used to represent a Person, Object, Location or Event. These objects can be used to communicate information to another person.

OOR can be used to:

- help show a child what is **happening next**
- support a child to make a **request**
- support a child to **make a choice**

OOR are particularly useful for early communicators. Early communicators may benefit from these **visual cues** being added to spoken words to support their **understanding**.

OOR can be used to represent important parts of their day:

Showing a child a **hat** could represent going to see **Grandad**.

Showing a child a **remote control** could represent the **television**.

Showing a child their **school bag** could represent going to **nursery**.

Showing a child their **plate** could represent **lunch time**.

OOR are **specific** to each child. It is important to use objects that are **meaningful** and **interesting** to the child. They must also be used often enough for the child to build connections between seeing the object and then the Person, Object, Location or Event.

As children become more familiar with their OOR they can use them to make **requests** and **choices** in their day such as what they would like to play with, where they would like to go.

Always start with Level 1 objects and progress if you feel they may be able to access objects from the next level. This will allow you to develop your OOR and possibly require less space to store them.

Level 1: Objects are the **same** as those used during the activity or by the person.

Level 2: Objects are **not directly** used in the activity e.g. a smaller cup, an empty cereal box

Level 3: Objects share a **feature** e.g. a small piece of artificial grass could represent going outside to play on the grass, a small piece of material could represent a pillow for bedtime.

Level 4: A **miniature** item is used e.g. a toy car could represent going in the car.

Level 5: An **abstract** object can be used e.g. a small piece of hosepipe could represent going to grandad's because the child always waters the garden with his grandad when they are there.

Planning Objects of Reference for a child

Notice what happens in the child's day. What **important**, **meaningful** and **motivating** people, objects, locations or events are part of their day?

Think about what real life objects could be used to reference these. These have to be very **specific** to that child so make sure the object is directly linked to what it represents.

Example

Using a rubber duck to represent bath time is good if the child plays with a rubber duck in the bath. If the child does not have a rubber duck then it won't be meaningful. Notice what objects always appear at their bath time instead and choose one of these (maybe their towel or a shampoo bottle).

Collect your chosen set of objects and keep them in a bag so they are **accessible** to all adults at home or in your setting. They must also be safe for the child to explore unsupervised.

Introducing Objects of Reference

Start by introducing **3** OOR. Select objects that you will have **many opportunities** to use in the child's day – these may be related to personal care, eating, drinking, favourite play.

Children will have the best chance to **build connections** between objects and the people, objects, locations or events they represent if they have **frequent** opportunities to see the object and then what it represents.

Plan for lots of **opportunities** to use the OOR. In their setting, make sure all staff members who support the child are using the OOR.

Have the child's OOR available **before** you need to use it.

Show the child the OOR **and give** it to them **immediately** before the person or object it represent appears, they move to the new location or the event starts. There should be **no delay**.

Use **simple language** at the same time as showing the OOR so the child can build connections between the object, the words they hear and the people, objects, locations or events. Agree with all adults supporting the child what words you will use with the OOR.

Return the OOR to its place once the person, object, locations or event has been reached.

Make sure the child knows where their OOR are so they can access them. You may not know when they will be ready to use their OOR to request or make a choice. Their OOR will need to be available for them to use when they are ready to.

Example

Milly enjoys sitting with her friends for snack at nursery. She often seems unsure and does not respond when staff tell children it is snack time.

Nursery staff want to help Milly to know when it is snack time. She always uses a particular cup at snack. Nursery use a second cup (the same as Milly's cup) as her OOR for snack. Just before snack time they take this cup and give it to Milly wherever she is in their setting. They say '*Milly, snack time*'. Staff then support Milly to move towards the snack area. Once she is sitting with her friends the OOR cup is returned to her OOR bag. Her snack cup is given to her.

Developing Communication using Objects of Reference

OOR can also have a photo or symbol of the object attached to them. This will support further symbolic **development**. This is where a child learns that a photo and then the symbol can also represent the person, object, location or event. This supports children in learning that spoken words can represent these things too.

Children should have their OOR available to them. If the child shows an interest in an OOR in their bag, you must **immediately** move to the person, object, location or event. We must act as if the child was **deliberate** in communicating this to us. This will help build **connections** between their actions and our response. This is an important step in building early communication skills.

If the person, object, location or event is not available immediately then do not have the OOR available to the child.

Gradually add OOR to the child's bag as they build definite connections between the objects and the people, object, location or events they represent.

Notice new things your child is interested in and add objects for these.

Plan for introducing 'seasonal' objects such as those that may relate to **specific celebrations** that are meaningful for the child (e.g. Christmas, Eid, Easter, birthdays, springtime, holidays, Halloween).

Children may **develop** their communication skills through using their OOR. You may notice that they:

- demonstrate more understanding of what is happening in their day and appear to transition easier between parts of their day
- regularly use an OOR to request things or to make choices
- begin to vocalise or point whilst using their OOR

Please **keep using** the objects to support your child and their developing communication skills.

Their OOR are **scaffolding** their communication development and it is important they remain available to your child.

Recommendations for moving from ‘me’ to ‘I’

These recommendations all focus on the adult modelling the use of I when talking. It may take your child some time before they use this all of the time in their talking.

To help your child to notice this word, you can describe what words they **should** use. If your child says ‘me like ice cream’ you can say ‘You say, **I** like ice cream’. Don’t ask them to correct themselves. Let them **hear** the correct version.

Sometimes children cannot correct themselves yet and will still use ‘me’ when they repeat the sentence.

You can **point** to yourself or **pat** your chest when saying ‘I’ to add a **visual cue**.

Praise your child if you notice them using ‘I’. Make a comment like ‘I heard you using your new word ‘I’ to tell me about what you were doing. Well done for remembering to say I’.

The activity suggestions below will all allow your child to hear many models of the correct use of ‘I’.

Turn Taking Games

Use games where each player needs to say that something is for them. Examples could include

Matching Pairs: Model ‘**I** found a pair’

Picture Lotto: Model ‘**I** need the bananas’.

Puzzles/ Jigsaws: Model ‘**I** know where this piece goes’

Picture sharing – using books, online catalogues, comics

Look at books, catalogues, comics, online games with your child. Make **comments** about things you can see:

I like the funny dinosaur.

I don’t like that snake

I can see the snake hiding under the log

I would like to play with that puppy

Pause after you have made a comment to allow your child time to share something. **Count to 10** in your head. If they don’t offer anything say ‘I wonder what you like on this page’ and then pause again to allow time for a response. Make another ‘I’ comment if there is not response after another 10 seconds.

'I do' play

Use toys or snacks with the child and their brothers and sisters or friends in class.
Hold up the toy or snack and ask who wants it. Encourage the children to use the phrase 'I do'.

Photo Sharing

Take pictures of you and your child **doing** things. Talk about the photos. Model little sentences for your child to hear and encourage them to make their own sentences like:

I went on the swing

I liked jumping in the puddles

When to refer

This error pattern alone does not typically require Speech and Language Therapy input.

If you are noticing this error alongside other errors in your child's talking please complete the Speech, Language and Communication Screening Tool for their age. Please call the Speech and Language Therapy Advice Line should you have any concerns about your child's use of language following completion of the screener.

Sequencing Language Level 1

Once children can produce short sentences of 4-5 words, the next step to support understanding and use of language is to support them with connecting ideas together.

The easiest way to support with this is to introduce use of the word '**and**'. This word can help us to connect shorter sentences or phrases together when we are asking the child to follow an instruction or to support them to connect ideas together in their talking. This may take some children time to develop. Joining ideas together involves more planning and remembering either what was said or what to say. This can be quite a jump for some children.

Strategies to use to support children with beginning to connect language

- add a **commentary** to your day. Make simple comments about things that the child may be interested in e.g. 'you picked the green cup and the blue plate for snack', 'you watched Paw Patrol and Paddington'.
- use a **gesture** to show you have said 2 things so the child can notice both parts e.g, hold up finger for each thing you comment on.
- start by joining 2 ideas together and move onto 3 once you feel your child can process and remember more information. You may have noticed them beginning to use 'and' in their talking.
- Always model the language first before asking the child to create a sentence. If your child is secure with their numbers you could write a '1' and a '2' down to show them we would like them to tell us 2 things. You can gradually reduce this as they become more confident with thinking about and remembering 2 things to say.
-

Toy Play (e.g. Mr Potato Head, dolls, shop)

You will need

- Toy with lots of possible choices

Give your child instructions on what they need to do e.g. 'Give him eyes **and** his nose', 'dolly wants her dress and hat on', 'can I have some pizza and an apple?'

Help your child to decide what they will tell you. Let them find the 2 things first before saying their sentence. This will help with their planning. Support them by pointing to the items as they give you their instruction. Gradually reduce these supports.

Tidy Time

You will need

- Things that need tidied away

Use tidying as an opportunity to model 'and'. Start by giving your child instructions but progress to them telling you what to tidy.

Give instructions like 'Put the pig and the cow in the box', 'Put your socks and top in the basket'.

Feely Bag

You will need

- A bag or box
- A set of objects to put in the bag or box – a mixture of toys, everyday objects silly items

Take turns to take 2 items out of the bag and name them e.g 'I got a spoon and a Spiderman'.

Model this a few times for your child before asking them to say a sentence themselves.

Point to the items as the child says them so they remember to say both.

Progress to taking 3 items out once your child is consistent with remembering to use 'and' for 2 items.

Book Sharing

You will need

- Favourite books

Share the books with your child. The focus here is not on 'reading' the stories. Think about what is happening in the pictures or on the pages that you could comment on.

Make comments about what the characters are doing. Always connect 2 comments together e.g. 'Peppa is jumping in the puddles and George is on the slide', 'The Gruffalo has terrible tusks and terrible claws', 'the stegosaurus and the diplodocus are eating the tree'.

Pause after you make your comment to allow the child time to process the comment.

Make 'I wonder' statements to help your child notice other things they could connect e.g. '*I wonder what's happening here.....*'

Simon Says.../ Action Play

You will need

- Space to move around

Pictures of actions (not essential)

Hold up and/ or tell your child to do 2 actions e.g. 'Run to the tree and spin around'.

Practise this a few times until your child has heard and/or seen a range of actions.

Encourage them to tell you 2 things to do. Pictures or photos may help them if they find thinking of ideas tricky. Their sentences may not sound perfect. Our focus is just on them using 'and' so try to support them to use this e.g. 'Touch tummy and stamp feet'.

Follow the instruction and model back as you do it 'I'm touching my tummy and wiggling my feet'. This way the child can have an opportunity to hear the correct grammar but to also know they were successful in giving you the instruction.

Sequencing Language Level 2

Once children can sequence 2 short sentences together using 'and' (see 'Sequencing Language Level 1'), we can then support them with sequencing ideas together that happen in an order. At this stage, children need to be developing an understanding of time.

Sequencing at this level involves children understanding what **order** things happen in. Children need to have an idea about sequences having a beginning, an end and the steps in between.

Strategies to support sequencing skills.

These strategies all build on each other so work through them in the order given.

Sorting object/people into first, next, last

To begin with, we need to ensure your child understands the concepts of first, next, last. The easiest version of these concepts relates to **positions** of objects/people – this is more concrete than when these words relate time.

Practise talking about who is first or last in a line, find the first page in the book and the last page, talk about who was first in a race. If the child is confident with letters, talk about which letter is first in a word, which is next and which is last.

Practise lining objects up – talk about which object is first and which is last.

Model sequencing language in everyday activities

Early sequences will contain just **2 steps** that happen in a particular order or that we request a child to do in a particular order.

Use sequencing language during everyday activities where there will be a short sequence of actions. Use words like *first and then*, *first....next*

This will help develop your child's awareness of language related to time.

Daily Activities / Routines	
Getting dressed	<i>First</i> put your socks on <i>then</i> put your shoes on.
Brushing teeth	<i>First</i> find your toothbrush <i>and then</i> get your toothpaste.
Shopping	<i>First</i> we need cereal <i>and then</i> we need to get milk.
Snack time	<i>First</i> we need to wash our hands <i>and then</i> we can have snack.
Registration	<i>First</i> we'll sing our Hello Song <i>and then</i> we'll see who's here today.

Sequencing skills (everyday sequences)

Take 3-4 photos of everyday sequences that are familiar to your child. This could include getting dressed, familiar routines in the nursery or school, a regular routine after school.

Use 2 photos from the routine to begin with. Talk with the child about the sequence and order the sequence with your child. Once you have practised this with a few routines, give your child the 2 photos and ask them to order them. You can describe the routine to the child. They do not have to tell you the sequence at this point.

Once they are confident with 2 parts, add in another picture so they are now placing 3 parts in order. You still re-tell the sequence for the child so they hear lots of sequencing language models.

Remember to use **sequencing language**, *first and then* or *first, next last*

e.g. *first* we washed our hands, *next* we had snack and the *last* thing we did was go out to play.

Point to the photos as you re-tell each part.

Encourage your child to then sort 2-3 part sequences from their day and re-tell you the sequence.

If possible, gradually withdraw the photos. Continue to use them if your child needs this visual support to be successful in using their new sequencing language.

Use a first grid to visually support the child in ordering and re-telling the sequence. Make your grid to match the number of steps the child will be ordering.



Sequencing skills (past events)

You can develop sequencing further by talking about **past events** a child has done. This could be a school trip or what they did at the weekend.

This will be more difficult as your child now has to **remember** what they did, **know** the words to use and **sequence** their story together.

Have photos for 3-4 parts of their 'story'. As above, start with just 2 steps and always begin by helping them to visually sequence their story with you re-telling it.

Work through the same steps until they can sort and re-tell their 3-4 part story themselves.

Add in as many additional parts as your child can remember.



Sequencing skills (story book re-tell)

Using story books are a great way of further supporting sequencing skills.

Read familiar stories to your child. As you share the pictures, encourage them to tell you what has happened so far in the story by looking back at the pages.

Once your child becomes very familiar with the story, let them share the book with you and tell you what happens on each page. Model sequencing words (first, next, and then) for them even if these are not in the original text of the story.

If you have picture sequence games or stories sequence pictures you can use them as short story re-tells. Practise arranging the sequence into order and then model the story for your child before supporting them to sort and re-tell the story themselves.

Sequencing Skills (prediction)

Predicting what will happen next is a further step in sequencing skills. Begin by modelling questions 'What will happen next?' You may also need to model the answer to begin with.

Begin by asking 'what will happen' during everyday situations or familiar events:

'The milk spilled...what will we do next?' It's Molly's birthday today, what will we do?

Progress to asking what will happen next during favourite TV programmes, films and books. If your child finds this tricky, you can give them 2 choices for what you think might happen.

If this is too easy, you can introduce new stories or situations to encourage your child to use some more problem-solving to try and predict what will happen next. Begin by offering some options for them to pick from.

Useful Resources

Simple Sequences: Colorcards Available from www.routledge.com

www.twinkl.co.uk – search 'sequencing cards'

Stammering: Supporting children who stammer in your setting

Some children may enter your setting with a stammer. Parents may share with you that their child is stammering at home. For some children, a stammer can develop during their time in Early Years and into Reception.

We know that:

- 8% of children will experience stammering
- stammering is neurological, meaning it is to do with the way the brain is wired and develops, and is often related to the child's language development.
- stammering often starts between 2-5 years old
- stammering often runs in families
- children who stammer are good communicators

A child who is stammering may show some or all of the following features:

- repetitions – this may be sounds, syllables, words or phrases
- prolongations – stretching the sounds out.
- blocking – getting stuck on a sound or word
- struggle – this may include head or body movements, grimacing, going red, clenching fists
-

For some children stammering will vary. This means there will be times where they will stammer more or less depending on a number of different factors.

It is important when focussing on speaking that we support children to develop their communication skills overall rather than only focussing on one aspect of communication that the child may be finding harder.

If a child is stammering then reducing the pressures on talking can make it feel easier for them.

Strategies to support children who stammer

1. Be a good listener

Listen to what not how they are saying it. This helps to show them that you are really interested in what they have to say. By listening you are showing the child that you will wait for them to finish what they are saying. This can help them rush less.

2. Keep your talking slow

Try to slow down when you are talking, and use lots of pauses. This helps the child to slow down when they are talking which can make talking easier.

3. Keep talking simple

Use short and simple sentences. This keeps the conversation easy. The child is less likely to use complicated sentences that can make them stammer more.

4. Reduce Pressure to talk

Describe what children are doing by commenting and asking fewer questions. Questions can make us feel like we need to reply quickly, which can be hard if you are stammering. Turning questions into comments helps keep the conversation relaxed. For example, question: "What are you doing?", comment: "You're building a big tower!".

5. Take turns when talking

Make sure all children use turn-taking rules when talking. Giving children plenty of time to take turns in discussion helps them to talk in a relaxed way.

6. Talk about talking

Reassure the child that you know talking can feel tricky for them sometimes. This can help them to know that you understand their concerns.

7. Build Confidence

Building children's confidence with things you know the child enjoys and can have success with. This won't always involve speaking. You could model making mistakes. You could model positive responses to making mistakes not only when talking.

8. Manage reactions of others

Within your setting discuss differences in communication. Try to maintain a neutral response if other children make comments about the child not talking or stammering and move the situation on so as not to draw too much attention to the child.

9. Include the child

Accept all forms of communication so that we can build trust with adults as communication partners. Offer opportunities to contribute 'Tommy, I wonder if you would like to tell us anything from your weekend?' Count to 5. If no response make a comment that maybe he would like to tell you later on and move on.

10. Share these tips

Children need consistent predictable responses from adults. Make sure everyone who the child spends time with has these tips. This will help make talking feel easier for them in all situations.

What should I do if I am concerned?

If you notice a child stammering or avoiding speaking situations discuss your concerns with parents. Obtain consent from parents to make contact with our team to discuss how best to support the child.

Useful Resources

- Action for stammering children <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org/>
- Stamma <https://stamma.org/>
- Michael Palin Centre <https://michaelpalincentreforstammering.org/>
- My Stammering Tap <https://vimeo.com/239094673>
- My Stammering Child https://youtu.be/czMT-xZ71_4
- Me and my stammer https://youtu.be/vwV6oxu_6lk
- South Tees SLT – why do some children stammer? <https://youtu.be/0-KgZ321qeQ>
- Penguin app – a new app for parents of children who stammer

Supporting Children with Unclear Speech

Children's speech sound systems can develop at different rates for a number of reasons.

This may mean that for some children, they have a lot of language but their speech may be difficult for less familiar listeners to understand. This may be more noticeable when the child is talking about something beyond the immediate situation.

Children who are unclear when speaking to others may benefit from a referral to our team for assessment and possible support.

Strategies to support children with unclear speech

Children with harder to understand speech need to be able to **communicate** successfully with others around them. These strategies will support both the listener and the child.

'Show me'

Ask the child to **show** you what they are talking about. Can they take you to it, point to something, use a gesture or action? This can be a very immediate way of them letting you know what they are talking about. Once you have the context for what they are talking about, this will help you with understanding what else they might tell you.

Repeat back

Repeat back what you have **understood** your child say. This will **reassure** them that you are listening and want to know what they are saying. This will also help them to **narrow down** what more to tell you as they will now know what you have understood e.g. *I' know you're telling me about something at the park...what about at the park?*

Use questions

Using **yes/no** questions or **choice** questions can help you to focus in on what the child is telling you. Their response will either be yes/no which will be easier for the listener to understand or it will be a repetition of something you have said e.g.

Are you telling me about something at school? (Yes/No)

Are you telling me about something at school or at home? (Choice)

Share information

Share information with important people including family members and school/ nursery staff. Consider using classroom apps to share information and photos (e.g. ClassDojo, Tapestry, Seesaw). This will be important in helping your child to talk about things that are important to them even when they are out of the immediate context.

If you child is starting a new setting consider making a simple 'All About Me' book with photo of important people, pets, toys, TV programmes in. Your child will then be able to share this with new adults. This will support your child to be able to share information successfully with others.

Model sound in words

Model the sounds in words for your child to hear – don't try to correct them. Your child will be saying their words as best they can and won't always be able to say them any better just now. They may be able to copy them correctly but not use the sounds by themselves yet. It is important for them to **hear** the correct sounds in words. Sometimes children can become frustrated when they are asked to correct their words too often.

Include 'Special Times' in your day

Include opportunities in the child's day where they can play games with adults and/or their friends where the resources used are very **visual**. This will allow the child to have lots of **success** with sharing their messages related to what they are doing. Examples could include playing a pairs game, lotto or bingo for example. In these examples, the child would usually just be labelling the picture they find so others playing with the child should be better able to understand them. This will give the child lots of opportunity for successful communication with others during these times. Try not to use activities such as construction or role play for your special times. This will require the child to share longer pieces of information and may lead to more occurrences where their messages are not understood by others.

Develop awareness of sounds in words

It is important children have a good **awareness** of sounds in words (phonological awareness).

Singing nursery rhymes and songs, playing simple 'I spy' games or finding objects that all start with the same sound are all ways to help your child to notice sounds in words. These skills will be really important to support your child as they begin to learn to read and spell.

Be honest

Let your child know when you just haven't been able to understand them.

It is important to have a plan of how you could try to know what they were telling you. If you are in a setting; could you ask parents when they pick the child up? Is there a sibling in school or a friend who could help? It is important that children know we are interested in what they are telling us. This will encourage children to keep trying to communicate with us. Some children who are more difficult to understand can become quieter in situations where they are not understood.

Useful Resources

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/what-is-phonological-awareness/znrk8hv>

Supporting Early Word Development

The aim of these recommendations and activities is to help the child **hear** lots of single words during everyday **routines**, **activities** and in their **play** and **exploring**.

It may take children a little time before they start to **use** the words themselves. They will need to hear adults **model** these words many times. Think about different types of words to model including **object names**, **describing words** and **action words**.

Some useful strategies to use to support children developing their use of single words.

- **notice** what your child is noticing and make short comments that relate to these. They could be comments about what the child is **looking** at, what they're **hearing**, **eating**, **touching** or **smelling**. If your child is interested in something then words that relate to this will be more important to them.
- **acknowledge** any attempts your child makes to communicate something to you – they may do this by pointing, gesturing, using their own 'word'. **Say** the word for what they have communicated to you. This will encourage your child to keep trying to share their messages with you and will let you model the word they need **in the moment**.
- **repeat** words or short phrases 3-4 times e.g. 'oh, it's broken, the car's broken, broken car'. This will let your child hear the word in context.
- **pause** after you have modelled and repeated the new word. Count to 10 before saying something else. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together and maybe copy what you have said.
- **don't** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.
- use **natural gesture**, **actions** or **signs** (e.g Makaton) to support what you say. These added **visual** cues can help children to learn words. They may copy these before saying the word as these can be easier for some children.

There are activity suggestions and ideas for using language in your everyday routines with your child on the next page.

It is important that you focus on **modelling** words **many times** Keep your language short and simple to help your child tune into these key words

Feely Bag Play

Collect a set of household objects and place them in a bag or a box. Take one object out at a time and give it to your child. Let them explore the object. You can model some words related to the object and what your child does with it:

Object words	Action words	Describing Words
cup	brushing	big
spoon	eating	small
brush	drinking	shiny
cloth	washing	smooth
shampoo	wiping	heavy

Laundry Game

If your child enjoys helping you with the laundry make a game of this with them. Make simple repetitive comments about the clothes.

Object words	People words	Describing Words
t-shirt	Daddy's sock	clean
socks	Mummy's dress	dirty
trousers	Brother/Sister names t-shirts	smelly
dress		wet

Book Sharing

Look at pictures in books together. Notice what your child is interested in and talk about those things. Use the same words or phrase each time you share the book. Your child will enjoy knowing what words and pictures are coming next. Pause as you turn each page to allow your child time to process the picture and possibly say something themselves.

Bubbles

Bubbles are great for developing some early words because you will blow the bubbles many times. This will let your child hear the same words lots of times. Try to use the following words:

Bubble words					
bubbles	pop	all gone	more	wow	big

Ready Steady Go....

You can use 'ready, steady go' or '1,2,3' with many types of play and toys. This could include car or ball play, chasing games or tickle play.

Children enjoy the anticipation of knowing something is going to happen and will usually want to let you know they would like for the play to continue. Try to add a pause after you have said 'Ready, steady....' or '1....2....'. This will allow you child time to try and say the word themselves.

If they show they want the play to continue by looking at you, taking your hand or making a noise then respond to this as if they had said 'go'. This will encourage your child to keep communicating with you and in time they may use the word. Keep adding in the pause as your child may say the word later in your play.

Snack time and Mealtimes

Some children will find food motivating and may be very interested in what they are eating and drinking. If you can, include your child in preparing their snacks and meals. There are lots of good words you could use:

Object words	Action words	Describing Words
names of foods cup spoon milk	cutting stirring chopping pouring	clean dirty smelly wet

Bath time

There are lots of nice words to use at bath time if your child enjoys this time of day. Try to use some of the same words each time it is bath or shower time. This will help your child to predict the words that you might use and may start to use some of them.

Object words	Action words	Describing Words
tummy hair bottle fish bubbles	splashing washing drying pouring	wet hot cold soft slippery

Supporting Quiet Children in your setting

Some children may be quieter in your setting than they are at home or with familiar caregivers.

Quiet children:

- may not talk freely to adults in your setting
- may or may not speak to their friends when in your setting
- may talk within earshot of an adult but they would not regularly speak directly with an adult
- may whisper or use short responses
- may often appear unsure or worried
- may be sociable
- may be very confident during non-speaking activities.
-

Why are some children quieter in their setting?

Children may be quieter due to a combination of factors. These may relate to their **speech**, **language** and **communication** skills, the **environment** or factors **within** the child.

Strategies to support Quiet Children

Implement these strategies for a **half-term**. If the child responds to these **continue** to use them. If you see minimal change in the child's talking please obtain consent from parents to make contact with our team to discuss how best to support the child with their developing communication.

1. Respect and accept all forms of communication

The child's chosen forms of communication need to be **respected** throughout the setting. The child may choose to point, use short responses, draw, use eye pointing. Respond to all communication effort as if the child had 'said' the words.

Goals for the child should relate to them being able to **communicate** with others in their setting using a '**total communication**' approach where all forms of communication are accepted and encouraged.

Be cautious of insisting children say please, thank you, sorry. These can be quite time pressured and will always have an audience.

Ensure you have means for the child to communicate their **needs** non-verbally through the day such as answering the register, asking for the toilet and picking their lunch.

Allow the child to respond through pointing, using objects, pictures or actions when assessing their skills.

2. Ensure you have some predictable and familiar routines

Children will feel safer and more secure if they can recognise routines in your setting. Support routines with visuals and rehearsal to support the child with knowing what is happening in their day.

3. Reduce Pressure to Talk

Join children in what they're doing and playing. **Describe** what they're doing by adding a **simple commentary**.

Comment don't question. Use '**I wonder....**' statements to include the child in your wondering about them but not to place a demand on the child to answer e.g. 'I like chocolate. I wonder what your favourite food is....'

Pause after making a comment to allow the child processing time (count to 10 before making another comment)

4. Talk About Talking

When you are in a 1:1 situation with the child, reassure them that you know talking can feel tricky for them sometimes. Make comments like 'Miss knows you will talk when you're happy to' or 'You can tell me later if you'd like?'

5. Build Confidence

Work towards building self-confidence and resilience with things you know the child enjoys. Give them non-verbal jobs to do they can be successful in. Model making mistakes. Talk positively about all of their other achievements that do not relate directly to them talking or not.

6. Manage Reactions of Others

Other children may make comments about a child not talking. Make sure they hear you using the comment that the child **likes to talk** and they **will talk** to people in the setting when they're **happy** to. Then move the situation on. Children may come to tell you they've heard the child speak. Try to give a **neutral response** and move the situation on so as not to draw too much attention to the child.

7. Consistent Predictable Responses from Adults

Children need to feel **safe** with all adults supporting them – teachers, classroom cover, dinner nannies. They need to know that no adults will try to '**catch them out**'. Ensure that **all** adults who may support the child in your setting are aware they may not talk. Ensure that all adults respond to the child in the same manner and using the same strategies.

Respond in a neutral manner if the child does speak to you. Some children can feel uncomfortable if there is additional attention given to them for speaking.

Useful Resources

Supporting Quiet Children: Exciting Ideas and Activities to Help 'Reluctant Talkers' Become 'Confident Talkers'.

Maggie Johnson and Michael Jones.

Understanding and using plurals

Plurals are words that mean ‘more than one’.

There are two main types of plurals:

1. **Regular plurals** Words that have ‘s’ added to show ‘more than one’
(cats, eyes, boats)
2. **Irregular plurals** Words that change when there is ‘more than one’
(foot –feet, mouse – mice, person-people)

As children begin to use plurals they may make some errors. We may hear children adding ‘s’ to irregular plurals and say ‘mouses’ or ‘mices’ for ‘mice’ for example. Some children may add extra plural endings and say words like ‘catses’ for cats. These are quite typical errors for early language learners.

These all show your child is noticing the plural words and are experimenting with figuring out how to use them in their talking.

Typically we expect children to understand plural words before they start to use them. Using regular plurals correctly usually happens before irregular plurals because of their more consistent pattern.

Strategies to support children using plurals.

- **model** plural words as opportunities arise during your everyday routines and play. Model both regular and irregular plurals for your child.
- **contrast** the ‘one’ word with the plural word e.g. *‘I have one strawberry, you have lots of strawberries.’ ‘There’s one cow in this field and lots of cows in this field’.*
- **repeat** plural words 2-3 times e.g ‘you have lots of strawberries, lots of tasty strawberries on your plate’. This will let your child hear the plural words in context a few times.
- **pause** after you have modelled and repeated the plural word. Count to 10 before saying something else. This will allow the child time to process what you have said, connect ideas together and maybe copy what you have said.
- **don’t** ask the child to copy you. They may not be able to and may not be ready to use this in their talking yet. Remember to focus on helping the child to **hear** you use the language.

Activity ideas

For all of these, remember to model talking about ‘one’ of something and ‘more than one’ of something so your child hears that the words are different. If your child attempts to use a plural word, acknowledge and accept what they’ve said and model the correct version back for them to hear.

Daily Activities / Routines	
Getting dressed	<p>Talk about putting on one sock or two socks.</p> <p>Talk about how many arms or legs your child has got into an item of clothing 'You've got one arm in...now you've got both arms in.'</p>
Food	<p>Talk about what your child has on their plate 'Ooh, you've got lots of peas', 'you've got 3 chicken nuggets', 'you've only got one chip left'.</p>
Shopping	<p>Talk about what you need or what you've put in your basket</p> <p>'shall we get one banana or lots of bananas', 'we need 3 yoghurts'</p>
Snack time	<p>Comment on what snacks are available/ what children are eating</p> <p>'Tommy has one piece of apple left, there are lots of pieces in the bowl still', 'are all the cups in the sink..? I can see one cup on the table'.</p>
Pet care	<p>'Buster played with lots of dogs at the park.' 'Molly has 2 bowls, one bowl for her water and one bowl for her food.'</p>

Play	
Building Blocks	<p>'We've got lots of blocks to build with today'. 'I have 1 green block and 1 red block'. 'Your tower has 4 blocks'. 'Do you have any small blocks?'</p>
Play Doh	<p>Talk about what the child is making – <i>one star, lots of stars, lots of worms, different shapes.</i></p>
Cars/ Vehicles	<p>Talk about parts of the vehicles (windows, wheels)</p> <p>Talk about how many of each vehicle you have 'we have</p>
Animals	<p>Talk about how many of each animal you have. Sort animals into different places and talk about what animals are where '<i>there's 2 cows in this field and a pig on the tractor</i>', '3 geese are in the pond.'</p>
Any favourite toys	<p>Use any favoured toy or activity of your child's. Look at opportunities to model plurals by thinking about how many of the items your child has, thinking about the different parts of the items e.g. wheels, legs, spikes.</p>
<p>A great way to use play is to comment when things are broken or missing e.g. oh no, the car only has 3 wheels. A wheel is missing'. 'Oh, no Spiderman only has one arm. Let's fix him so he has 2 arms again'.</p>	

Books	
Counting Books	Books with number activities will have lots of opportunities for modelling plural words.
Story Books	<p>Many children's' story books will have stories and pictures that have opportunities for modelling and using plurals:</p> <p>The Gruffalo (Julia Donaldson) <i>"He has terrible tusks, and terrible claws, And terrible teeth in his terrible jaws."</i></p> <p>The Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle) 'he ate one apple, two pears, three plums, four strawberries'</p> <p>Aliens Love Underpants (Claire Freeman & Ben Cort) <i>Aliens love underpants of every shape and size. But there are no underpants in space so here's a big surprise..."</i></p>
Picture Scene Books	<p>Books with busy picture scenes offer opportunities for helping you child to notice 'one' and 'more than one'. Share scenes with your child noticing what you can see:</p> <p>'I can see a dog....can you see a dog? We found 2 dogs'</p> <p>'Is there one bird in the sky or lots of birds?'</p>

Nursery Rhymes/Songs	
Number songs	<p>Any songs which include counting will have opportunities for modelling plurals:</p> <p>10 Green Bottles, 10 Fat Sausages Sizzling in a Pan, 5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed</p>
Favourite Rhymes and Songs	<p>Many favourite songs and rhymes have plurals in them. Some examples include: Wheels on the Bus, Three Blind Mice, Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes.</p>
Add props to show 'one' and 'more than one' as you sing the song	

Understanding and using pronouns

Pronouns are words that tell us the gender of the person we are talking about (e.g. he/she/they). They also let us know how many people we are talking about (e.g. I/we)

Children may have difficulty with particular groups of pronouns:

Subject pronouns: I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they

Object pronouns: me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them

Possessive pronouns: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs

If you notice your child making errors in all of these groups – focus on the subject pronouns group first.

If your main concern is with their use of me/I, please see the advice sheet ‘Pronouns: Moving from Me to I’.

Strategies to support children using pronouns.

- focus on supporting your child’s **understanding** of pronouns first. Use pointing and gestures to help your child to know who you are talking about when you are using pronouns.
- **model** pronouns as opportunities arise during you everyday routines and play.
- **model don’t correct.** If your child uses an incorrect pronoun, accept what they have said and model back what they said using the correct pronoun.
- **contrast** the correct pronoun with the one your child uses e.g. *he* is reading a book and *she* is watching the TV, *his* bike is red and *her* bike is purple.
- **repeat** your language models to allow your child another opportunity to hear the correct pronoun in context.
- **don’t** ask your child to copy you. Remember to focus on helping your child to **notice** and **hear** you use the language.

Activity ideas

For the purposes of these activities, they/them will be used as a plural (more than one person) pronoun.

If your child is familiar with hearing they/them as a singular pronoun and has family/ friends/ toys/TV characters who use they/them please use it as a singular pronoun as well in the activities where the opportunities arise.

These activities focus on creating opportunities to model pronouns. Remember to pause after you have made some comments to allow you child the opportunity to create their own sentences from something they’ve noticed.

Play

Character toys

Action Play (he/she/they)

If your child has mostly male or female toys make sure to introduce a toy that is of the opposite gender too so you can contrast. Use just the 2 toys to begin with.

Make sure your child knows the male 'he' toy and the female 'she' toy. Check this by asking your child to find *he* and then to find *she* – check this a few times.

Make one of the toys do an action and comment on what they are doing. Trial this a few times until you feel your child is familiar with the activity. Then ask them to make one of the toys do the action e.g. *He* is jumping, *She* is lying down.

If possible take photos as you work through this so your child can talk about these again.

Once they are confident with he/she, you can introduce 'they' and model both toys doing an action. Progress to giving your child instructions with *he*, *she* or *they*.

Sorting game (he/she/they)

Collect a set of items the characters might want – things that belong to them or food items for example.

Hold up each item and ask your child 'Who wants the...?' Model some answers to begin with e.g. *He* wants the sword, *She* wants the pancake, *They* both want the cars.

Sorting game (his/her/their)

If your focus is his/her/their you can work through the same sorting activity described above but ask 'Whose is this?' and model e.g. The sword is *his*, The pancake is for *her*, the cars are *theirs*.

Everyday activities

Use everyday activities to model pronouns and check for your child's understanding of them. Remember to use pointing or gestures to support your child to know who you are taking about:

Where is your coat?	Give it to her.	He would like a banana please.
Can you find his shoes?	They need the paintbrushes.	Get my cup please.

Books

Story Books

He/She/They

Look for opportunities to model pronouns as you share books.

Rather than using the character name include some pronouns instead:

‘Spiderman’s climbing up the building’ could be changed to

‘*He*’s climbing up the building’

‘Peppa put her boots on’ could be changed to ‘*She* put her boots on’.

‘The Minions are being silly’ could be changed to ‘*They’re* being silly’.

His/Her/Their

Notice opportunities for using pronouns when talking about pictures e.g. instead of saying ‘Look at the Gruffalo’s nose’, you could model ‘Look at *his* nose’.

Vocabulary

The purpose of vocabulary support is to develop a child's knowledge of a word by developing their awareness of both the meaning of the word and the sound structure of the word.

This information will help children to **build links** with others words already in their vocabularies.

It is important when focussing on vocabulary development that we develop these links **between** words rather than just helping a child to remember lists of words.

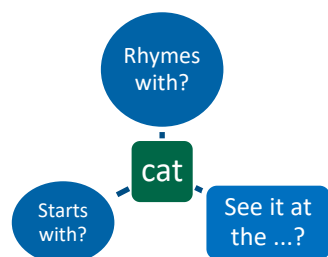
Through building this **network of connections** between words, children will be better able to learn, store and recall words when they need to use them in their talking or written work.

There are some **good practise** approaches you can put in place that will support general word learning.

- introduce new vocabulary **before** a lesson and **re-cap** when possible. You may need to use a new word *at least* 12 times before a child will retain and recall it.
- use **visual materials** to make new vocabulary items as concrete as possible. This will be particularly important when teaching new concepts.
- ensure new words are learnt in a **multisensory** way. A child is more likely to remember new vocabulary if they experience the word.
- use new vocabulary across subjects to give the child lots of experience of hearing and using it in **different contexts**.
- include a range of words in your vocabulary focus including **object names** (nouns), **actions** (verbs) and **describing words** (adjectives).
- **define** new words clearly. Help children relate new words to words already in their vocabulary say e.g. it's like..., it's the opposite of
- use new vocabulary words **in a sentence** so the child can hear the word in context e.g. *they lifted up the drawbridge.*
- use topics of interest for a child to **build** on vocabulary knowledge e.g. if a child is knowledgeable about dinosaur names, introduce talking about foods dinosaurs might eat, where they might live, label body parts, find other animals with spikes.
-

Below are some activity suggestions. You can amend the activities to fit with the vocabulary you are focusing on.

Word Maps



Semantic (meaning)

What does it do?
What does it look like?
Where would you see it?
What parts does it have?

Phonological (sounds in word)

What does the word begin with?

Can you think of another word that starts the same?

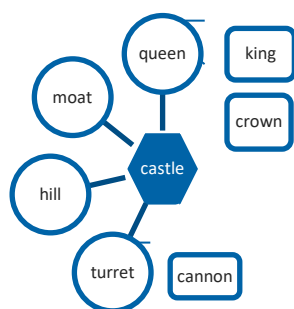
Can you think of another word that rhymes?

Word maps are a visual tool to help children focus on words by thinking about the **sound structure** of the word and the **meaning** of the word.

To build a word map you would draw a 'map' similar to the example above. Write/ draw/ put a picture of your target word in the middle. In each box you would write a question from the set above. You would aim to have a minimum 5-6 questions that you work through. Make sure to include **meaning** and **sound** questions. Children may find some easier than others so plan for additional tasks to support them with being able to answer the more difficult questions.

Recap the word maps you have completed. Play a 'guess who' type game where you cover the target word/picture and read out all of the information from the map. Ask the child if they can figure out what the word in the middle is by using all of the information. This will help them to **build** on those links as they put all of the information together about the target word.

Spider Diagrams



Spider diagrams – write a target word in the middle of a sheet of paper. Draw lines from the word and write/draw/ add pictures related words at the end of each line. These words can be related to the target in any way. You could use this to support classroom topic work or a book being enjoyed currently by the child for example. Re-visit add to the diagram often as the child's knowledge of the subject develop.

See the Word Maps section above for how to **recap** this information with the child.

Categories

Category work helps children to develop the concept of words belonging to groups. From understanding that words belong together in a group, children will also develop skills of talking about why words don't belong.

Level 1

Decide on 2 categories and collect objects/pictures that you are going to sort. Select categories that are very different – such as vehicles and animals or food and clothes.

Have something visual to sort the objects /pictures to e.g. a clothes line for the clothes, a shopping basket for the food (this will help the child to start to build those connections about the items). Sort

each item with the child. Talk about the object name, where you would see it, which category it belongs to. Help the child with sorting all of the items.

Once the child is secure with knowing the category names and you have sorted the items together. Allow the child to sort the objects themselves. Support by asking questions about the objects (use some of the semantic questions from the word map section).

Level 2

Once the child is secure with the concept of categories and can sort to early categories with minimal adult support (e.g vehicles, food, clothes, animals, food, toys) you can begin to differentiate within a category e.g. zoo animals versus farm animals, fruit versus vegetables.

By adding in this next level of complexity, a child now has to develop or recall some additional information relating to the word.

Odd-one-Out

Once the concept of categories is established, introduce odd-one-out activities. Select 3-4 objects/pictures and support the child to tell you which one is the odd one out and why. This will use all of the information they have thought about during the category activities.

Opposites

Big

Little

For older children, this can be a good activity to further develop their knowledge and understanding of word meanings. Children may have developed a sense of words that belong together, this will help them to think about how words are linked by being the opposite of each other.

There are many resources available for opposites work. Make sure to talk about what both of the concepts relate to e.g. they tell us about how something feels, they tell us about the size of something. This will help the child to know how the words are linked and then to talk about how they are different.

Remember, if possible use a multisensory approach to talk about the words.