

Top ten activities for developing and improving your child's speech and language skills

1. **Be a good role model** – speak clearly and slowly and face your child when speaking. If your child says a word or a sentence incorrectly, rather than correct them or ask them to repeat it, just say the word/sentence back to them correctly to show you have understood. This way your child always hears the correct version
2. **Remember your language level** – do not use words or sentences that your child will not understand. Speak to them using language they can understand, explaining any new words
3. **Make time to sit down with your child** – spend some quiet time with your child every day, away from distractions. Look at a book together and talk about the pictures
4. **Turn off the TV** – children do not learn language or social skills by watching TV, and new evidence shows that too much TV watching prior to starting school can affect listening and attention skills, which will impact on their learning once they start school
5. **Observe and comment** – when you are playing with your child, take a step back, do not feel that you have to fill the silences, just comment on the things your child is doing so they can hear (and learn) new vocabulary.
6. **Let your child lead** – let your child lead the play. This can build self-confidence and does not put pressure on them to talk and respond to the adult all the time.
7. **Books, books, books** – books can be used in many ways to develop language and early literacy skills. Evidence shows that children that have more exposure to books prior to schooling often develop literacy skills early.
8. **Sing songs and nursery rhymes** – songs and rhymes contain rhythm and rhyme, skills that help with speech and literacy development
9. **Feed language in, don't force it out** – comment and expand on your child's words and sentences, rather than asking them to repeat words. If your child says "car," respond with "big car" or "yellow car" or "fast car."
10. **Make every opportunity a language learning activity** – if it's a trip to the shops, or a bath-time, you can make every activity a language learning activity. Point to things, name them, sing a nursery rhyme, or ask a question