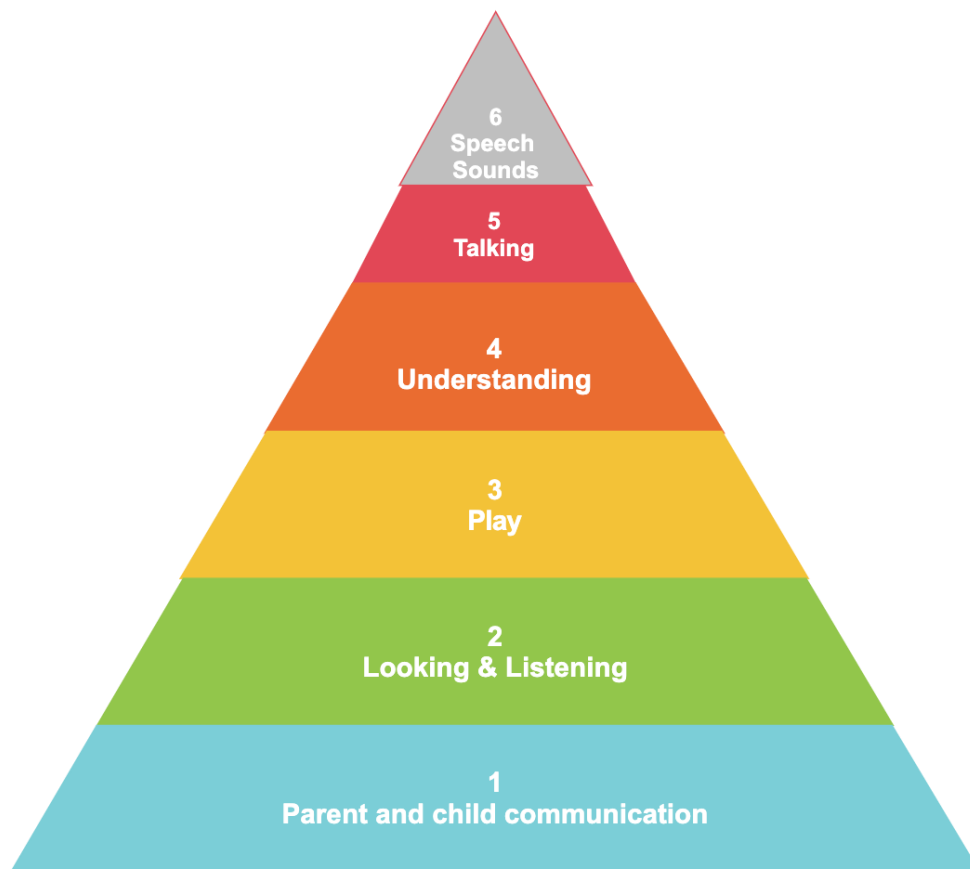




Developing Communication

How Does Communication Develop?



Skills at the bottom have to be in place before the skills above them can be developed

Strategies to Develop Communication

- 1) Creating Communication Opportunities
- 2) Supporting Understanding
- 3) Building Sentences
- 4) Play
- 5) Environment



Developing Communication

1) Creating Communication Opportunities

Communication Opportunity	Reason for child's communication	Examples
Offering Choices	To choose	Choose 2-3 motivating items or activities (e.g. toys, snacks, drinks etc.) Ask the child "What do you want?" and encourage them to: 1) Choose by reaching out or pointing 2) To say the item/activity that they want 3) Build up to sentence level and encourage the child to say "I want..."
Sabotage	To request items	1) Giving wrong items when the child makes a request 2) Setting up an activity with a key item missing 3) Putting toys/snacks just out of reach, but still in view (e.g. in a container or on a shelf)
Give items in small amounts	To request more	1) Blow bubbles a few at a time 2) Give a few crisps at a time
Wait before helping	To request help	Be ready to help, but avoid doing things your child needs help with straight away. E.g. Wait or busy yourself with a short, quick activity before helping your child with their coat zip.
Do the unexpected	To correct a mistake	1) Pretend to put your child's clothes on yourself. 2) Give your child a cup without juice in it, whilst making sure the juice is available for them to request.
Give non-preferred items	To refuse	1) Offer an apple when you know your child wants sweets. Make sure the sweets are available to request too. 2) Offer a book when you know your child wants a doll.
Wait!	To respond	After asking a question, give your child plenty of time to answer. Some children just need a little longer to process what you are asking of them before responding.



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2) Supporting Understanding

Typically, children begin to understand a few spoken words between the ages of 6-12 months. 'Understanding' itself means that a child is aware that the word carries a particular meaning. In early development, the words children often learn are labels for objects and actions that they experience in their everyday lives.

Strategies:

- Get face to face with your child before speaking with them as this supports them to look up at you, give eye contact, and listen.
- Cue your child in to listen by saying their name and, if necessary, giving them a gentle tactile cue such as touching their arm.
- Make sure you are talking about what the child is focusing on.
 - Children pick up on things that they are interested in and will not be able to connect the word to its meaning if their attention is elsewhere.
 - To do this, follow your child's lead when they are playing by letting them direct their play and commenting on what they are looking at or doing.
- Repeat the same words several times.
 - Children need to hear a word multiple times at the same time as experiencing the object of action to understand it.
- Use short, simple language and single words when speaking with the child.
 - Lots of things we say to children can be communicated in simple language. For example, instead of saying "Can you give me the cup over there?", you could just say "give me cup" or even "cup" whilst pointing.
 - The longer the sentence, the more difficult it is for your child to link the right word to its meaning.
 - The language you use should be within your child's understanding, meaning simple and easy to follow.
 - Use gestures, pointing and real objects to support your child's understanding further.
- Support understanding of words in the right context.
 - This means using words that are relevant to the situation at the time.
 - Learning words in context is important as not only do children learn the meaning behind the words, they learn how these words can be used to give a message to others.
 - This can be achieved through everyday experiences, pretend play, and structured activities using core vocabulary (e.g. setting aside 10 minutes to discuss a topic, such as parts of the body).



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3) Building Sentences

In order to help your child develop their language, we need to make sure that we are providing them with good language models. For example, if a child's spoken language is currently at one word level where they are mainly using single words, then we would model language consisting of two word phrases. Likewise, if they are using two words together, we want to model three words, etc.

Strategies:

- Listen to and identify different sounds as part of a child's every day routine. Talk about what you can hear and try to make it fun and exciting!
 - E.g. phone ringing, ambulance outside, tap running, dog barking.
- Follow your child's lead and describe what your child is doing as they are doing it using simple language.
 - This can be during play, reading stories, or everyday activities
 - E.g. 'Teddy drinking juice!'
- Show your child how to put two early words together by describing your own actions
 - E.g. 'Mummy's eating' / 'Daddy's sitting' / 'Teddy's sitting'
- If your child has said an object name, you can show them how to add on early language such as 'gone' and 'more'
 - E.g. If your child says 'bubbles', you can say 'more bubbles' / 'bubbles gone!'
- Extend your child's sentence by adding another word onto theirs.
 - E.g. If your child says 'Teddy eat', you can say 'Teddy eat apple'
- Offer choices to encourage spoken language.
 - E.g. 'Is Teddy on the swing or slide?' → If the child responds 'swing', you can confirm this in a modelled sentence, 'Yes, teddy on swing'.
- Ask simple questions, supporting your child to answer and providing models if they're having difficulty responding.
 - E.g. When reading a book or watching a show, ask your child questions such as 'Where did it go?' / 'What happened?' / 'What is teddy doing?' etc.
- If your child uses the wrong word order in a sentence, so words are jumbled up, model this back to them in the correct way.
 - E.g. If your child says 'Sleep boy', you can say 'Yes, boy sleeping'.
- This also applies if your child uses incorrect words or empty vocabulary (e.g. this/that/thing/it). Model the correct word back to them without drawing attention to their error.
 - E.g. If your child says 'girl on thing', you can say 'Yes, girl on swing'
- Provide specific praise to your child. This will encourage them to communicate with you more.

Remember that your child may not repeat the modelled language back straight away. Children learn at their own pace, therefore it's important not to put too much pressure on them.



Developing Communication

4) Play

Play is integral to developing a child's communication and social skills. When children play, they learn about the world around them through their experiences — what they see, hear, and feel. Children feel safe and happy when they play, making 'playtime' the perfect environment to practice and become confident in learning skills, such as talking and interacting with others.

Pre-linguistic Skills

A lot of what children learn during play is very important to learning to talk. Pre-linguistic skills are the things children need to learn before they can learn to talk. Below are some key skills learnt through play:

- Cause and effect — knowing that when you do something, something else happens because of what you did. For example, the child knows that when you push a button on a Pop-Up toy, a figure will pop up.
- Turn-taking — waiting for your turn. Taking turns with your child will build their social skills and their emotional regulation. Sometimes, you have to wait your turn, and sometimes you have to share with others, but that's alright! For example, playing with a ball or playing simple board games such as snakes and ladders.
- Pretend-play — this involves using your imagination by taking one thing and pretending it is something else. Pretend play is important in developing children's empathy and social skills, as well as vocabulary and problem-solving, because there are many words and situations that children do not have the opportunity to learn through their everyday routine. For example, playing Doctors or picking up a stick and pretending it is a sword.
- Social skills — the rules of being with and talking to other people in society.

Activities to Support Play

- Aim for at least 15 minutes of play time with your child per day. During this time, try and give them your undivided attention.
- Join in! Your child will learn from what they see you do.
- Keep things fun. Remember there is no wrong way to play.
- Follow your child's lead by focusing on what they are interested in.
- Model new activities and show your child new things to do when playing (but bear in mind that they might not always be interested!)
- Copy what they do.
- Label and describe what they are doing with simple language that they can also use. This will build their understanding and encourage them to use language as well.
- Pretend-play games such as dress-up and role play:
 - Doctors, shop-keepers, builders, farmers - can learn about the associated items, places, animals involved in different scenarios



Developing Communication

5) Environment

- A child's environment should be safe, secure, and full of stimulating activities and items that they can explore and learn from (e.g. books, educational toys)
- Provide your child with a clear and consistent routine.
- Use a now/next board - this means using a whiteboard to write what is happening in the NOW and what will happen NEXT.
 - This will help the child prepare for what's to come as they know what to expect
E.g. 'Lunchtime now, painting next' or 'TV time now, bedtime next'
 - Use a whiteboard so it's more flexible to write down the activities. Also very helpful to draw and cross off activities in front of the child.
 - Count down a minute before each transition - e.g. '1 more minute of TV and then we have to go to bed'
- Other visual supports, such as taskboards and visual schedules, are also very helpful in breaking down daily activities and supporting your child's understanding.
- Balancing tolerance and demands - build in plenty of 'downtime' to give space for anxiety to lessen in between demands - e.g. using painting as a 'cool down' period before the next activity begins.
- Allowing plenty of time by giving your child 10 seconds to process, understand and respond.
- Agreeing non-negotiable boundaries and sharing clear reasons for this, making sure that the child is aware of rules and expectations (can use the 'Teaching Consequences Train Track' for this - **noted below**)

Teaching Consequences

- Allows child to visualise the course of events - what would happen if he chose one or the other

