

HELP YOUR CHILD REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL



Current research indicates that a child's speech and language skills are one of the strongest predictors of literacy ability. Therefore, parents can easily contribute to their child's oral language development by simply talking and reading with their children

Oral language Activities

Involve your child in lots of talking and listening

- Turn off the TV during dinner - substitute with 'Talk Time'
- Make sure you are filling up the 'language pie' - feeding in the new words to the conversation, discussing what words or phrases mean, telling jokes or commenting on how and what people say.
- Ask open ended questions to encourage your child to talk and express ideas
- Play word and listening games to build vocabulary and expressive language, even something as simple as "What's the first word you think of when I say..." Then explain how the words are connected.
- Involve children in activities beyond immediate family- EG library, museum, zoo
- Model for them your own thinking - e.g. I've decided to cook chicken tonight/ I can't remember their name/ I thought you wanted orange juice, not lemonade.



VOCABULARY- IT'S MORE THAN JUST WORDS

Some young children learn new words very quickly and effortlessly- soaking up words like a 'sponge'. Vocabulary is crucial to comprehension. If a child does not understand the key words in an instruction .e.g. those indicating time or position, then they will be unable to follow and might appear not to be paying attention or 'behaving'. Consider how crucial the underlined words are to understand the following-
Go and stand in between Sally and Mark.
Bring your money to school tomorrow.



Oral language Activities

What can we do to help?

- be enthusiastic about words
- provide fun word games activities- focusing on word meanings, opposites, associated words, brainstorm words in a category e.g. fruit, small things, people's jobs
- talk about words that have more than one meaning
- explain idioms .e.g. fly off the handle, He has a green thumb, etc
- discuss jokes and what makes them funny
- read stories with children and talk about interesting words
- highlight new words, revisiting them many times-children with language difficulty may need to hear a new word even more often than their peers, before they grasp the full meaning
- encourage children to say new words out loud and praise their efforts
- **Have fun with words!**



TAKING TIME FOR TALKING- The important step to literacy.

Driving in the car, walking home from school, having dinner, reading a story- all are excellent places for "Taking time for talking". Both you and your children will be rewarded for your efforts.

Some tips for Talking Time:

- Find time in the schedule of your busy day to give undivided attention to talking with your child.
- Follow the child's lead when they initiate the topic of conversation or idea.
- Involve your child in a variety of experiences and later talk about the events. You can model how to retell them in sequence.
- Remember that your comments as well as your questions will engage your child.
- Be animated in your interaction- using facial expressions and intonation in your own speech to assist understanding and engagement.
- Be sincere as you talk with your child. They will know if you are pretending to listen!
- Accept all responses and attempts to communicate- eye contact, smiling, pointing as well as language.
- Enjoy rhymes and sing together
- Enjoy your child's favourite book. It is valuable for you to read and re-read the same favourite story. Repetition teaches children about how stories 'work' and frees them to think about broader and deeper issues in the story and how these might relate to their own experience.



STIMULATING LITERATE LANGUAGE

School brings further demands on children's developing language. At school children have to:-

1. Sit still and listen to large "chunks" of talking
2. Follow instructions given by the teacher, often about unfamiliar tasks.
3. Learn the 'rules' of who is allowed to talk in the classroom, when and for how long.
4. Understand and talk about events which have not been shared with the listeners.
5. Think and talk about words and other aspects of language talking.

Talking tips to stimulate literate language

- Give children opportunities to talk about past events using photos and other memorabilia to prompt them.
- Ask your child to retell a favourite story
- Stimulate discussion about the story using some 'thinking' verbs, e.g. Why did....*decide* to leave the party? I *wonder* what you would do.
- Talk about words- what they mean, which words mean something similar, is there another meaning for the word?
- Provide activities to encourage children to 'wrap the nouns'- adding something before and after a noun, e.g. I saw a man. I saw an old man. I saw an old man near the tree. I saw an old man near the drooping tree. I saw an old man near the drooping tree in the back garden.
- Prompt and praise your children's efforts with maintaining explanations or descriptions.
 - Ask questions to lead the discussion on e.g. Why was he feeling so sad?

Repeat and/or re-word what has been said and provide a joining word to lead on to the next idea, e.g. You went to the zoo on the school bus but you were late getting there *because*.....



LISTENING AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

This involves tuning into the sound system of our language and an awareness that words.



Oral language Activities

Develop listening skills and Phonological Awareness Development

- Encourage active listening- use audio tapes, Simon Says and memory games like I went shopping and bought...
- Clap out the beats/syllables in words
- Play "I Spy" with first sounds initially and then letters
- Talk about rhyme and play rhyme games
- Enjoy alliteration (e.g. Can Cameron count cabbages?) and tongue twister games.

REGULAR LITERATURE and ORAL LANGUAGE

Make a regular time to read to your child

- Read a variety of books, picture books, nursery rhymes, books that emphasise sounds. Read stories as well as information books.
- Take time to talk- stop and predict what will happen next, talk about and draw the best part of the story, what does the story remind them of?
- Ask questions that probe understanding e.g. What was the main problem in the story? Or Why did the character do that? What would you have done?
- Have fun with language and jokes and discuss the meanings of unusual words.
- Reread familiar stories- your child can help you retell or act out the story.



Continue to read to your child even when they have started to read themselves

To develop the awareness of words in sentences

- *Grow a sentence-* Add a new word each turn and take turns to repeat it.
e.g. Dog... A dog.... A big dog.... A big dog grows.... A big dog grows loudly.
- *Tap or Clap-* Clap out the words in simple sentences. I like jelly. Jenny has red shoes on. Demonstrate that words that take longer to say use more letters when written. Compare a short word, *up* with the long word *hippopotamus*

Language Activities

- **MEMORY GAMES-** e.g. I went shopping and I bought... Parent and child take turns to add an item of shopping to the list, repeating the list in order each time before adding a new item. Items could be within a category- food, toys or clothing.
- **LANGUAGE DETECTIVES-** Keep a small photo album and collect items as a basis of a starting point for your own stories. Add your own photos too!
- **20 QUESTIONS-** Choose a 'secret' item. Children ask questions which generate a 'yes' or 'no' answer. E.g. Is it inside the house? Is it alive? Children must discover the 'secret' item before they have used up 20 questions. Can vary to- "Guess who I saw today?"
- **FELT OR NEWSPAPER PICTURES-** Use these to create a simple story.
- **SORTING-** Give your child a small collection of simple objects to sort into groups. Ask them to discuss and explain how they made their decision. E.g. banana, tennis ball, apple, spoon, biscuit, pencil, un-inflated yellow balloon, cup, soft toy. Did they put all the things the same colour together? Perhaps they differentiated by shape or things you can eat versus things you can't, or hard or soft things. Remember there are no right or wrong answers just different ways of thinking and using language.
- **DRAW A STORY-** Ask your child to draw three or four pictures about themselves or other family members. Together create 'our' talking story by using the pictures to guide the story. Use some simple story starters such as 'Once upon a time there was a ...called...(insert child's/family members name) and he/she liked to ... One day...

To develop the awareness of rhyme

- Chants and Nursery rhymes
- Rhyming Bingo
- Listening to rhyming stories such as Dr Seuss books. Children can supply the rhyming word at the end of the sentence.
- "*Hospital*" rhyme. Complete the rhyme. e.g. 'Mrs Peck hurt her ... (neck)'.

Awareness of rhyme has been shown to be an important predictor of early literacy success.

WHAT'S THE OPPOSITE?

- Make up cards to play matching games with opposite words like fish or snap. Alternatively call a word out and name the opposite. Choose from the list or come up with your own.

no/yes on/off in/out black/white hot/cold
tall/short
up/down big/small day/night stop/go happy/sad
open/closed



USING LITERATURE TO EXPLORE LANGUAGE

Reading to your child is still a very important part of incidental language learning, even if they are independent readers.

USEFUL TIPS FOR READING TO YOUR CHILD

- Choose books that reflect your child's interests and experiences.
- Be patient about your child's questions. Remember that asking questions is how young children learn about the world.
- Find books with a strong storyline and talk about what happened at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the story. Was there a problem in the story and how was it solved?
- Add a little spark of imagination to create the right atmosphere- a few sound effects and character voices.
- Put into words your own thoughts about the story such as, 'I wonder why he did that', 'I like the part where...because...'
- If the book is a firm favourite and has been read many times before, try different ways of sharing the story-involve children in repetition of phrases or key parts of the story, close the book and 'remember' the story together, draw the best part of the story and talk about why it is the best, or act out the story using simple props or drawings of characters attached to icy pole sticks.

It is through reading books that we learn new vocabulary and are introduced to concepts and ideas beyond our immediate experience.

PROMOTING STORY TELLING

Model for your child the components a quality story contains, including a beginning, middle and an ending. Try these ideas:

- PASS THE STORY Start with Once upon a time there was (the traditional story beginning) then introduce the character. Each person then continues the story for 30 seconds at which time it is passed on to the next person. Don't forget to include the setting for the story as well as a problem that needs to be solved. Be prepared for the storyline to diverge and end in an unexpected ☺

- CREATE YOUR OWN BOOKS Use family photos of events such as a birthday party or a trip to the zoo. Later when the photos are developed, sequence them and use them to dictate a story or retell events as they happened. Other topic suggestions are- Things I really like.... My dog/pet- create an information book or alphabet book based on animals or actions.
- STORY STARTERS

Use the following story starters to get you going on an oral story.

- When I was a tiny baby...
- If I were a fly I would...
- One day at school a strange thing happened...
- The little dog dug under the fence and looked out...



Try making up some of your own and remember to ensure your story has a beginning, middle and an end.

ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES WHEN ON THE MOVE

Turn off the radio/DVD and have some "talk time". In the glove box of your car place this list as some games to play when on the move.

- Pass the story (refer to last weeks newsletter)
- Play 'I spy'
- 20 questions
- Make up short sentences based on the letters of number plates - PSN (Please sign now)
- Rapid Recall- name as many colours, animals, things at the beach etc...
- What's the opposite of?
- Joke time- tell jokes making sure to discuss the funny parts.
- Talk about billboard and advertising signs
- Listen to story tapes
- What's wrong- say a nursery rhyme and occasionally making a errors. E.g. Baa Baa black peep. See if children can hear the error.



REGULAR TALKING TIME

- Start a photo album or treasure box and collect items from past events to stimulate oral language like retelling an event in sequence. E.g. movie ticket, birthday card, aeroplane ticket, photo etc..
- Make a photo photo/picture board to regularly come back to. Practise and expand on discussions and vocabulary.



REGULAR TALKING TIME

• MORE THAN ONE- PLURALS

Try and make up sentences using the singular and plural of each.

fly/flyes	glass/glasses	box/boxes	knife/knives
calf/calves	sheep/sheep	reindeer/reindeer	shorts/shorts
leaf/leaves	shelf/shelves		
goose/geese	mouse/mice	child/children	foot/feet
tooth/teeth	clothes/clothes	hat/hats	book/books



REGULAR TALKING TIME

THINGS AREN'T WHAT THEY SEEM

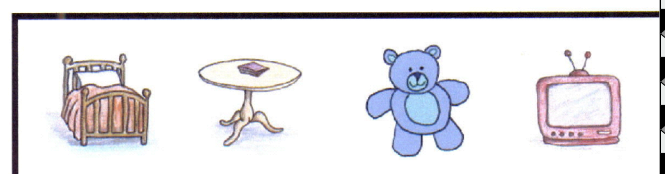
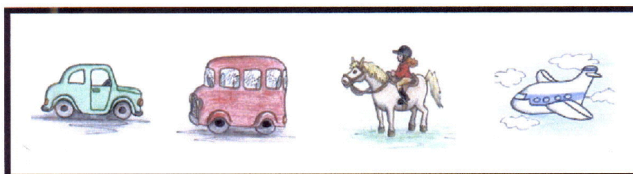
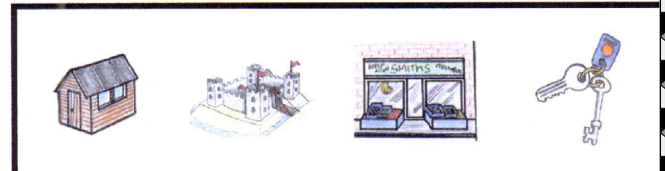
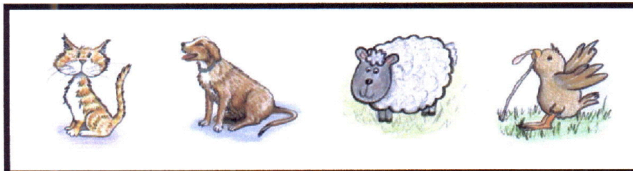
Much of the English language sounds strange if you take the meaning literally. Young children take considerable time to understand the more abstract meaning of words and phrases.

By drawing or demonstrating the concrete meaning of the following sayings, as well as explaining and using in context their real meaning, you will promote children's understanding - and have fun!

- Dirt cheap
- It's raining cat's and dog's
- I'm all ears
- He got up on the wrong side of bed
- It goes in one ear and out the other
- Don't let the cat out of the bag
- Don't throw in the towel
- She 'has a heart of gold'
- She's pulling my leg..... really means.....



ODD ONE OUT- WHICH ONE IS THE ODD ONE OUT? Why?



The way we receive information and act upon it is just as important as how we express ourselves. Try these activities to strengthen auditory processing.

LISTENING FOR INSTRUCTIONS

- When giving instructions have children repeat what is expected so they know what to do.
- Play 'SIMON SAYS'.
- BODY PERCUSSION ECHOES- use clapping, clicking and slapping patterns to develop student's short-term auditory memory. Start a short clapping pattern for kids to echo. On second time around vary the pattern by introducing a click or slap. Gradually longer and more difficult.
- DRAW WHAT I SAY- Have children draw a picture from your oral directions. Begin with simple sequences of instructions such as, 'Draw a square. Colour the square blue'. With practice, children will be able to follow more complex sets of instructions and you could include commands such as, 'Write your name at the bottom of the page in red'.



IT'S FOR YOU!

Use two old telephones and as role-play props to develop appropriate skills for telephone use. Initiate the role-play and by 'calling' on one phone. The caller could be:

- a friend with a party invitation
- a wrong number
- a friend asking to come and visit

IT'S TELEPHONE TIME

- You call Grandma and get the wrong number
- You call the dentist to make an appointment
- You want to invite your friend to a sleepover
- Call and order a pizza
- Someone calls and wants you to donate some money to the poor.
- Dad calls to say he will be late.



Try recording a message on an answering machine. Alternatively pretend you have called a friend and the answering machine came on- what do you say?

WHICH VOICE?

Children's vocal inflections, expression and volume should change according to the current social or physical situations. Produce voices suitable for:

- the playground
- talking at the dinner table
- talking on the phone
- in the classroom
- visiting the library
- class presentation
- calling for the ball during a netball/football game.



LET'S GIVE INFORMATION Try these activities for party games!

GUIDE DOGS- Select an area inside your house as the end location. Blindfold one person and instruct your child to guide them through the maze by voice alone.

DIRECTIONS- Hide a selected object in a room. Give directions around the room for your child to find. E.g. go over the chair etc.. Model appropriate language and then swap over. Make sure to follow exact directions so they can become more detailed.

STATE IT CLEARLY- Describe an object in a room/house using five statements. See if the other person can guess.

MARTIAN- A Martian has arrived at your house and he is staying for a while. Tell how to:

- Brush your teeth
- Make your favourite sandwich
- Get ready for school
- Read a book



Remember to model for children how to give clear instructions.

CATEGORIES

Announce a category such as colours, sport or boys names. While players keep a simple 2 beat rhythm (e.g. clap-click), each person must name something from that category on the second beat. If players cannot think of anything, repeats a previous answer or pauses for too long, a new category is chosen.

Try these categories:

- Animals
- food
- toys or games
- occupations



DON'T SAY ANYTHING

Body language also influences our interactions when we are talking to someone. Try communicating messages using non-verbal cues. Experiment with:

- facial expressions (e.g. surprise, disbelief, sadness, pain),
- gestures (e.g. nod/shake head, shoulder shrugs)
- other body language (e.g. arms crossed, turning body away, open arms)



YAP TRAPPING

1. One person asks a question
2. The person responding must mime the answer by using different facial expressions, actions, finger or hands to describe symbols or numbers.

GENERATING QUESTIONS

Using a colourful and visually interesting picture as a stimulus, have your child answer oral questions about the picture's content. Use the five 'wh' words- what, where, when, who and why- as the basis for the questions (e.g. where is the bird? Why is the child crying? Who is carrying the suitcase?). As children become more capable, have them ask the questions.

WHAT WOULD YOU ASK?

- Mary invites you to her birthday party
- Your friend gets a new toy, and you would like to get one, just like it.
- You see friends playing a new game
- Grandmas needs you help
- Your friend is crying
- You are going on a holiday.



CONVERSATIONS

Provide frequent opportunities for children to engage in conversation.

Try: DEBRIEFING SESSIONS- At the end of the day discuss 'What did you enjoy the most about today?' or 'What did you achieve that you're proud of?'



- PLOT PARTNERS - Stop a story midway through and have children discuss what might happen next?
- CONSIDER THIS - Invite children to formulate and express their opinion on a 'hot topic' encouraging their reasoning. Hot topic ideas-
 - Television should not be on during a school week.
 - There should no homework ever
 - Children can stay up as late as they want.

PROBLEM SOLVING

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Interpret situations in order to solve the problems
- Discuss various solutions to the problem and talk about why one solution may be better than another.

'Hot topics'

- You want to play with someone, but no-one wants to play with you
- You left your lunch at home
- There is a new child in your class and he doesn't know anyone.
- You found a gold ring on the playground
- You see smoke coming from a neighbour's house



FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Being aware of our own feelings and emotions often influences our body language. Interpret the situation and express your feelings:

- How would you feel if... you heard strange noises at night?
- Name a time you felt embarrassed
- Make a surprised face
- How would you feel if... you won a prize for doing your best work.
- Make a puzzled or confused face
- Name a time when you felt angry
- How would you feel if your dog ran away?
- Take photos of your children demonstrating different facial expressions and assemble a feelings book.
- Find magazine pictures that show various emotions and make a 'feelings collage'.



GREETINGS AND POLITENESS

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Think about these social situations and talk about what you could say:

- Introduce yourself to your new teacher
- You see your best friend on the playground
- You arrive at soccer practice five minutes late
- You need to borrow a pencil
- You hurt your friend's feelings
- Three of your classmates are blocking the doorway and you need to pass.
- You don't like the ice cream flavour your friend's mother offers you.



ENJOY TALKING WITH YOUR CHILDREN.