

A Parent's Guide to Promoting Learning and Development at Home



Communication & Language

The acquisition of language and communication skills are fundamentally important in supporting children to be confident, capable individuals with the potential of becoming independent and successful adults.

Language is a complex life skill that most of us learn and use naturally throughout our daily lives without conscious thought. We use the spoken word to process thoughts, share ideas, feelings and experiences.



Many skills are required for communication to be successful; the ability to encode or decode messages, maintain attention and listen.

Language is the tool that enables communication and can be the spoken word or non-verbal communication in various forms including facial expression, sign language and the written word.

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Promoting Communication & Language

What to do	Top Tips
Value talk	Being an active listener, fully engaging with what your child has to say and showing you value their contribution encourages them to talk, promotes positive relationships and confidence.
Wait, watch & wonder	Children will often initiate conversation if given the time, pondering, e.g. using "I wonder" thoughts, is less threatening than asking direct questions. Children are more relaxed and more likely to respond (Fisher, 2016).
Thinking time	Young children need time to process before responding. Count to 10 slowly before prompting them.
Foster positive attachments	If your child feels safe and comfortable and knows you care about them they are likely to want to talk to you.
Avoid asking too many questions	Instead hold a conversation. When you do ask questions make sure these are open and purposeful. Children are more likely to respond in more detail.
Allow children to lead play and follow their interests	Engaged, excited learners will want to tell you about their play and exploration.
Use a sing song voice with babies	This makes it easier for babies to separate sounds in words and enables them to tune in to what you are saying.
Turn technology off	Model putting your own devices to one side. Face-to-face conversations are vital for developing speaking and listening skills and are really rewarding.



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What to do	Top Tips
Use commentary	Model language by talking about what your child is doing.
Use Gestures	Together with spoken language, gestures capture interest and support understanding.
Repeat children's language	Using correct pronunciation, word order and extending vocabulary by repeating words, models correct language in a sensitive and positive way.
Follow interests	If you talk about what your children are interested in, they are likely to be more motivated to speak.
TV Time	Limit the use of TV and watch together as much as possible. It is an excellent way to spark off conversations and learn new words when an adult can reinforce.
Quiet times	It's really important to remember that children need quiet time when you turn off background noise and have time just to play. This is really important for listening and language development.
Imaginative Play	When children take on a role they express themselves with ease as they get lost in the play.
Use technology	Keep in touch with relatives or friends they are separated from at this time e.g. e-mail, send photos, video chats to keep in touch and use it as an opportunity to ask your child what they might want to ask and say.
Explore photos	Talk about the differences and similarities – this exercise is great for sharing stories, which are so vital for communication development. For instance, See if you can find a similar photo of when you were young.

(Laxton & Leask, 2017; Communication Trust, 2020)

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"Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food" (DFE, 2017)

Exercise is essential to maintaining mental and physical health. It is important to be inventive and find ways for children to partake in vigorous physical activity using outdoor places, gardens and the indoors dependent on the space available.

Physical Development



Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

Active children are healthy, happy,
school ready and sleep better



Every movement counts



Get Strong. Move More. Break up inactivity

UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, 2019

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Promoting Moving and Handling

Activity	Top Tips	
Animal Moves	Discuss how different animals move to encourage your child to move in different ways such as. jumping, running, sliding	Move freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways
Balance & Control	Provide ways to promote balance e.g. put a line of tape on the carpet or on a plank on the ground in the garden. You can increase the challenge by suggesting they try backwards, sideways, tiptoes... Stopping and starting games e.g. musical bumps Balance on one leg. Use stopwatches to excite	Gain increasing control and co-ordination of large movements. Moves with increasing confidence in a range of ways appropriate to their age.
Dancing	Encourage children to use their imagination when moving to a variety of music genres e.g. turning, twisting, freezing, stretching, curling, landing and pivoting	Travels with increasing confidence and skill. Improves negotiation of space
Long and High jump	Make this a competition and/ or encourage them to improve their personal best. Measure the length they jump using standard and non-standard measures (see mathematics section). High jump can be from two feet together and a leap frog jump.	Gain increasing control and co-ordination of large movements.
Assault and obstacle courses	Create these inside or out. Consider what you can use to encourage your children to move in different ways and challenge their capabilities. Allow children to create their own courses.	Travels with increasing confidence and skill around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.
Using tools and equipment	See the Literacy (Writing) and Expressive Arts and Design (Exploring and using Media and Resources) posters. Woodwork is great and children are so careful with real tools!	Develop the capability to handle equipment and tools effectively.



Promoting Health and Self-Care

Activity	Top Tips	Learning (DfE, 2013)
Recipes, Menus & Cooking	As appropriate to the age allow children to make choices about snacks from a range of healthy options and explain in appropriate terms what healthy foods are and why. Create a menu for the week and model/ discuss having a balance of food type	Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food.
Workout & Yoga	There are some great YouTube videos specific to children to motivate them. Always try to join in.	Shows some understanding that exercise can contribute to good health
Time to let them try	Take time to slow the pace and nurture independence and improve social skills e.g. dressing and feeding themselves, managing small responsibilities e.g. water plants, lay the table. Allow your child to think for themselves by making choices and decisions. Value your children's input, encourage them to voice their thoughts, opinions and ideas.	They manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs with growing success
Toilet Training	Look up tips online. There is some really helpful advice.	To become dry and clean during the day and then the night.
Hand-washing	Model how to properly wash hands. Allow your child to explore hand-washing Use a timer or sing 'Happy Birthday' to manage at least 20 seconds.	Talks about ways to keep healthy and safe
Personal safety	Talk to your child throughout daily activities about how to keep safe: Managing tools and equipment safely Stranger danger Road safety Sun safety Safe relationships	Shows a developing understanding of safety when tackling new challenges, and considers and manages some risks. talk about ways to keep healthy and safe

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Top Tips to Promote Positive Behaviour

1. **Build a loving relationship**
2. **Focus on the positive:** Provide specific praise that highlights what your child does well. They will be likely to repeat this. Rewards can be useful to support key behaviours e.g. toilet training but the value of a warm hug or valued word should not be underestimated.
3. **Be a positive role model:** Remember children observe and copy the actions and behaviours of those closest to them.
4. **Be realistic:** know that what you are expecting your child to manage is appropriate for their age and capability. Be aware that this changes e.g. when tired or hungry, your child is less likely to manage their feelings as well as at other times.
5. **Make boundaries clear:** discuss them. Have consistent expectations of behaviour related to these.
6. **Reasonable consequences:** These can support understanding of appropriate behaviour. Remember positives MUST outweigh negatives for the child to feel nurtured, valued and to have a positive self- image
7. **Remain calm and in control:** This should prevent escalation.

Personal, Social & Emotional Development



"PSE involves helping children:

- *to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others*
 - *to form positive relationships and develop respect for others*
 - *to develop social; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings*
 - *to understand appropriate behaviour in groups*
 - *to have confidence in their own abilities"*
- (DfE, 2017)

Attachment Matters

Being cared for and loved by sensitive, responsive adults enables secure attachments to develop.

Attachments impact on children's:

- Self-image - how they think about themselves
- Resilience – the ability to overcome challenges
- Relationships – trusting others & making friends
- Confidence - to be curious and play & explore
- Behaviour – ability to regulate emotions
- Academic - short and long term achievements

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Promoting self-confidence

Activity	Top Tips	Learning (DfE, 2013)
Fostering Attachments	Openly show your child love and affection. Be sensitive, consistent & responsive to changing needs 'Tune in' so you understand your child's point of view and can be genuinely empathetic	To trust you and other adults To separate from you knowing you will return and others will substitute the care they need
Listen & Value	Value your child's input however insignificant it may appear to you. This makes a difference to the child who feels acknowledged and empowered.	Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions.
Realistic expectations	Allow your child to succeed by providing realistic, consistent boundaries that are clearly explained. Challenge your child within their limits and they are likely to strive to achieve. Too high expectation can mean your child moves to a panic zone that is overwhelming and demotivates	Can describe self in positive terms and talk about abilities
Positive Role Model	Demonstrate your confidence and share times you are unsure – It shows it is okay to feel this way. Children learn how to behave and what to expect from you. Praise your child, children need to hear much more praise than criticism to be confident, strong learners.	Welcomes and values praise for what they have done
The old and the new	Children love repeating positive, familiar experiences, but they need new experiences too.	Explores through play with developing confidence and independence
Exploration and no wrong	Allow children to play freely often. When there are no strict rules and you can't do it wrong e.g. block play, play dough, it allows the child to engage with and increase confidence.	Can select and use activities and resources with help and later growing independence



Helping children learn about & manage feelings

Activity	Top Tips	Learning (DfE, 2013)
The Language of Emotion	Model the language of emotions to discuss how you feel and to comment on how they and others may be feeling Encourage your child to talk about how they feel. Use visual prompts e.g. simple emoticons, drawing faces, stories to aid understanding	First to express feelings, then identify them, then manage feelings and finally empathise with how others may feel.
6 steps to conflict resolution (High/Scope, year)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions 2. Acknowledge your child's feelings 3. Gather information 4. Re-state the problem 5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose 1 together 6. Be prepared to give follow up support 	To negotiate and resolve conflict with increasing independence talk about how they and others show feelings
Puppets, dolls and soft toys	Use puppets and soft toys to model conversations and to encourage your child to talk (it is often easier for them to talk 'through' something else). Use these to address sensitive issues as they arise	Development of empathy Develop an understanding that own actions can affect others Talk about how they and others show feelings
Routines	Try to provide a routine Within the routine allow for calm, quieter times Within the routine ensure children have opportunities to explore sharing Allow children to help where appropriate e.g. making beds.	To feel safe and secure Time to reflect Can take turns and share resources
Use stories, mirrors and photos	Stories often have a moral or a journey of emotion within them. Discuss the feelings and why the characters may have those feelings. Pull faces in the mirror together that reflect emotions and talk about these.	Talk about how they and others show feelings
Pretend Play	Provide opportunities to dress up and act out scenarios - children will have the opportunity to explore feelings and experiences and feel safe to do so.	Talk about how they and others show feelings