



Developing Language in the Preschool Years Parent Information Session

Today you will learn about...

- The Child Development Service
- Spending time with your child every day to help their learning in everyday situations (routines)
- Helping your child develop understanding and talking skills
- The importance of play and stories in developing language for socialising and learning

The Child Development Service (CDS) provides free services for children who experience developmental difficulties in areas such as coordination and movement, speech and language, social and emotional skills, attention and behaviour and play, learning and some everyday tasks (eating, dressing).

Child Development Service staff work in partnership with parents and families to meet the unique developmental needs of each child.

Please see the Child Development Service Information for Families handout for more information.



Healthy kids, healthy communities

Compassion

Excellence

Collaboration

Accountability

Equity

Respect

More than one language

If your child is growing up with two languages, use your strongest language frequently



A strong foundation in your preferred language or languages will help your child learn English at school. Keep using your preferred or home language as it will be important for your child to participate and feel connected to their family, culture and community.

Spend time together

Everyday activities and routines provide great opportunities for developing language

AT HOME

OUT AND ABOUT

Spending time together with you is really important for your child's development. As parents we are really busy but it is surprising how many opportunities during the day there are to spend some time talking together.

When you spend time together you can 'tune-in' to your child



Notice

- What your child is doing or interested in
- How your child communicates
- How your child is feeling about a situation

and Respond

Tuning in to your child, will help you work out how to respond best.

Help your child to understand and manage their feelings

- Name the feeling
- Help them to calm down
- Encourage problem solving



When children understand their own feelings, they find it easier to understand how others are feeling.

Talk about how other people are feeling and why.

Spending time with your child, noticing them and how they are feeling, helps your child to feel secure and confident. When they feel secure and confident they can put their attention into socialising and learning.

Speech is the way we use our tongue and lips to make sounds. It is appropriate for children aged from three to five to still be learning their speech sounds, and there can be a big variation among children.

Grammar refers to the way that we put words together to make sentences.

Help your child with talking: speech and grammar

Children need to hear good models more often.

- Recast
(say it back the right way)
- Slow down
- Sing rhymes and songs



Help your child with talking

Talking together successfully depends on both being focussed on the same thing so...

Talk about:

- What your child is interested in or doing
- What you are looking at or doing together
- 'Why'

WAIT...for your child to have a 'talking turn'

Each day has many opportunities to comment on what your child is doing. Sometimes this might even mean putting into words something that has happened or what your child might be thinking. It is very helpful for your child when you talk about what they are seeing or what you are doing together, even if they already know it.

Your child learns to understand why things are happening before they can explain it themselves so it helps if you 'think out loud' about why you are doing things.

Help your child with talking

WAIT... then respond to what your child says:

- Use comments rather than questions
- Add some extra information



Help your child with vocabulary

- Use lots of different types of words (naming words, describing words, position words, social words, action words)
- Sort objects into groups
- Use and emphasise verbs/action words (e.g. walk; give; like; think)



It's important for children to learn lots of types of words (e.g. location words, description words) as well as naming words. Action words are important for the *meaning* of a sentence. Sorting objects into groups helps children organise their vocabulary so they can *find* the words when they need them.

Help your child with listening

Listening takes time to develop. It depends on:

- Being able to hear
- A quiet environment / limited distractions



Help your child with understanding language

Hearing → Listening → Understanding

Notice how your child responds...

- Break down instructions
- Model answers to questions
- Show what words mean
- Make links to what your child knows



Learning through sharing books

- Tell the story (often using your own words)
- Notice what your child is interested in and talk about it
- Make connections with real life
- Talk about how the characters feel



Source: Booksharing: Successful Interaction with your Child & Books, 2012

Books provide lots of opportunities for children to learn new vocabulary and ideas. Children learn best when books are not just read to them, but shared with them. This often means not reading the words but telling the story from the pictures.

Learning through sharing books

It helps if you...

- Can see the book and each other's faces
- Use an interesting voice
- Say something about the picture rather than ask questions
- 'Wonder' out loud about what is happening



When you're tuned in to your child and see what in the book interests them, you can make comments about this. When possible, talk about feelings, relate the story to your child's life, and give explanations about what's happening in the pictures/story. It's important to pause and wait so that your child can take a turn in the conversation.



With your help, your child is able to join your local library and have their own library card. Libraries are great for accessing books on a large range of topics and this, in turn, introduces a wide vocabulary to your child.

The vocabulary and ideas in books are often different to those our children experience in their everyday lives. Books and stories can open the world, and build their imagination.

Learning through play

- Playing with others helps develop social skills
 - Organise for 1:1 play times with other children
 - You may need to set up, stay close, join in to help



Learning through play

- Make TIME to play with your child
- Provide space and resources
- Help set up
- Support language development:
 - Talk about what your child is doing
 - Add ideas of your own
 - Talk about how characters are feeling
 - Take turns to play different characters



When children pretend they are someone else like a fireman, they use language and do things that make them feel, act and problem solve like that person. A good imagination can help your child when they want to tell stories.

Screen time

- Children's communication skills benefit from interacting and talking to real people
- Set limits on screen time and how often your child has access to devices
- Put away any electronic devices and turn off background noise when spending quality time with your child
- If using screens with your child consider the 3C's: Content, Context and Child



Talk with Day Care/Kindergarten

- Make a meeting time with the teacher
- Discuss:
 - Strengths & difficulties
 - Social and language goals
 - Provide email contact details for therapists
 - Help out in the classroom



What we have talked about today..

- Children learn language when parents spend time talking with them ...
 - During everyday activities
 - While sharing books
 - When playing together
- Parents support their children by...
 - Helping to manage and understand feelings
 - Tuning in and noticing ...
 - Responding in ways that help develop talking and understanding

Where to from here?

Parents and Speech Pathologists work together to discuss options and the plan for your child

- Practise the ideas on your Action Plan
- Discuss your concerns or queries with your clinician

Speech pathologists work in partnership with your family. You play a very important role and what you do at home with your child can make the biggest difference to their progress.

What can I realistically do right now?

Share your time with your child every day



Make a change in play, books or a daily activity



Use new strategies to support language

HIGHLIGHTED IDEAS



If you are finding you don't have much time to spend with your child, we recommend that you make finding time to spend one-on-one time with your child your first priority. If you are already spending regular time with your child, think about whether there is anything you'd like to try doing differently in your routines, during playtime, or when sharing books.

Please take some time to complete your action plan and remember to keep it handy for your reference and for when you talk to your clinician.

When you talk to the clinician you will have time to discuss how you are going with the new ideas and how your child is progressing. At this time you are also able to discuss future plans for your child.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

This publication is provided for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.

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