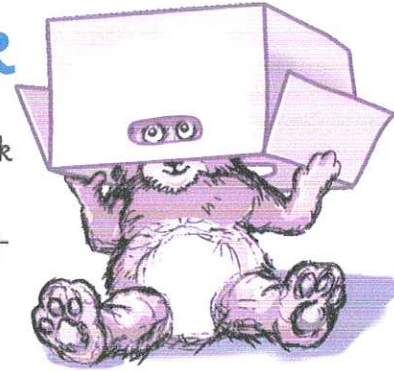


About Language Link

Your child's school is using a package called Language Link to help identify and support children with difficulty understanding spoken language. Here are some frequently-asked questions about this approach.



What is Language Link?

Language Link is a tool that gives Teachers and Teaching Assistants the ability to test for developmental language delays and put in place support where necessary. The assessment will also identify children with more complex difficulties who require input from a Speech and Language Therapist.

What does my child have to do?

Language Link is a computer-based evaluation for children aged between 4 and 8 years old. It takes about 15 minutes to complete. The evaluation consists of about 60 items which target 8 key areas of understanding. Your child will be asked to point to a picture from a choice of 3 or 4 and their responses will be coded into the computer by the adult working with them. At the end of the evaluation recommendations will be generated for any child with difficulties. If your child has a more complex difficulty, Language Link will recommend that the school discuss your child with the local Speech and Language Therapy service.

What happens next?

Your child's school will use the recommendations to put strategies and activities in place for your child. Your child may be included in a language group. The school will provide you with some easy activities you can do with your child at home.

What if my child needs speech and language therapy?

If the evaluation has recommended discussion with your local Speech and Language Therapy service the school will contact them to receive more advice. This may result in a referral to the local clinic or the therapist coming into school to see your child. You will be asked to give written permission for this to take place.

How can I help at home?

Research has shown that parents can make a great difference to how quickly a child can learn to understand and use spoken language. Use the Language Link homework activities to support your child at home. The school will give you copies of these.

About Speech Link



Your child's school is using a package called Speech Link to help identify and support children with speech difficulties. Here are some frequently asked questions about this approach.

What is Speech Link?

Speech Link is a tool that gives Teachers and Teaching Assistants the ability to assess children's speech development. It will identify speech delays and recommend speech sound programmes where necessary. The Speech Link Speech Screen will also identify children with more complex difficulties who require input from a Speech and Language Therapist.

What is the Speech Screen?

The computer based speech screening test is suitable for children between 4 and 8 years of age and takes around 10 minutes to complete. The screen consists of 40 easy pictures. Your child will be asked to name each one and their responses will be coded into the computer by the adult. At the end of the screen the computer will recommend age appropriate speech programmes with a suggested order of work. If your child has a more complex difficulty then the screen will recommend discussion with your local Speech and Language Therapy service.

What happens next?

Your child's school will download programmes and pictures from the web site. They are encouraged to provide you with a copy of the programme and some information sheets suggesting things that you can do at home to support your child's speech development.

If the screen has recommended discussion with the local Speech and Language Therapy service the school will contact them to receive more advice. This may result in a referral to the local clinic. You will be asked for your permission for this to take place.

How can I help?

Research has shown that parents can make a great difference to how quickly a child can learn new sounds. You can support your child and the school by working with your child at home when possible. The school will want to work in partnership with you so that practice at home and school gives the child a strong, consistent approach.

They may supply you with a copy of the programme as well as a leaflet about supporting speech difficulties. Keep a record of what you work on at home as this will be beneficial to your child and the school. Sharing a log book would allow you and the school to explore new ideas and to reinforce the programmes to provide good quality, consistent support for your child.

If possible write about family events and news as well. It's particularly important to include any names of family, friends or pets. This will help staff understand more of what your child is saying and will encourage your child to keep trying to communicate with school staff.

Supporting Understanding



Research has shown that parents are not responsible for children's speech or language difficulties. However parents can make a big difference to their child's language development by changing the way they talk and listen to their child.

Here are some ways you can help:

Slow down: If you slow your own speech down your child will find it easier to keep up. The best way to do this is to leave extra pauses between phrases.

Keep it simple: Use simple words or explain as you go along e.g. 'Astronaut... that means a person who goes into space.'

Keep it short: Less really is more when it comes to language. Lots of children with language difficulties find it hard to remember what they hear. By keeping instructions and talking short your child will find it easier to follow what you are saying.

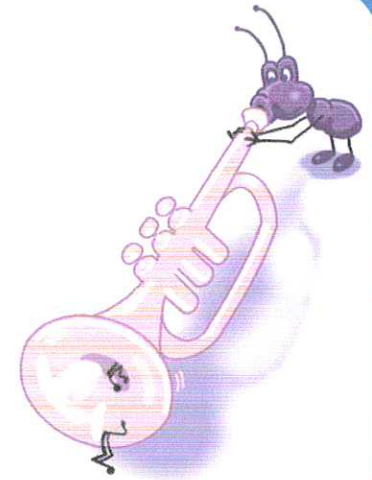
One bit at a time: If you are asking your child to do a few things try to break them down into single steps. Give your child time to complete the first step before giving him or her the next bit; e.g. 'Get your brush' (give time for child to go and get the hairbrush), 'Now brush your hair'.

Repeat repeat repeat: Your child needs to hear instructions and words more than once. It takes a lot of practice to learn a new word.

Make links clear: An important part of learning language is the ability to make links between words and ideas. Children with language problems often find this hard. Try to explain links as you go along. Talk about things that go together, talk about similarities and differences between objects; e.g. when preparing an apple talk about the features of the apple, how it is the same as other fruit and how it is different from other fruit.

Check understanding: Children with language problems can be very clever at hiding their difficulties. Ask your child to show you or tell you what words mean or what he or she has to do. Avoid asking if he or she has understood as your child will probably say yes even when he or she hasn't understood.

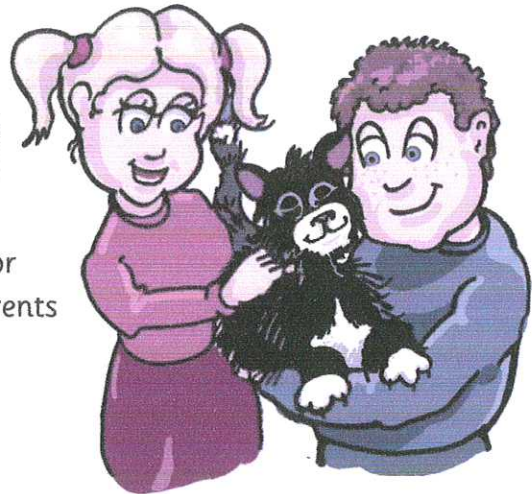
Helping Speech Develop



Research has shown that parents are not responsible for delays in a child's speech development. However parents can make a big difference to the child's speech development by changing the way they talk and listen to their child.

- 1) Encourage your child to listen to different sounds around them e.g. police car, toilet flushing, vacuum cleaner, aeroplane, next door's dog etc.
- 2) Talk about the sounds you hear and describe them e.g. loud or quiet, long or short, high or low.
- 3) Encourage your child to play with sounds e.g. blowing raspberries, funny laughs, animal sounds.
- 4) Tell your child nursery rhymes and sing simple songs. The ones where you can do actions are the best.
- 5) Encourage all your child's attempts to communicate. Talking is only one way to communicate. Actions, pointing, pulling faces even crying are all ways a child can tell you something.
- 6) Watch your child carefully and listen to them. Wait for them to tell you something whatever way they can.
- 7) Copy your child's sounds, words or actions. This lets them know you have understood and encourages them to try again.
- 8) Slow down. If you slow your speech down your child will find it easier to keep up.
- 9) If your child makes a mistake, say what they said back the right way e.g. if they say 'pid', you say 'That's right it's a pig'.
- 10) Don't make your child say things back after you. If you give them time you will find they do this naturally.

Encouraging Talking



Research has shown that parents are not responsible for children's speech or language difficulties. However, parents can make a big difference to their child's language development by changing the way they talk and listen to their child.

Here are some ways you can help:

Slow down: If you slow your own speech down your child will find it easier to keep up. The best way to do this is to leave extra pauses between phrases.

Keep it simple: Use simple words or explain as you go along e.g. 'Astronaut... that means a person who goes into space.'

Keep it short: Less really is more when it comes to language. Lots of children with language difficulties find it hard to remember what they hear. By keeping instructions and talking short your child will find it easier to follow what you are saying.

Choices: Give your child choices to encourage them to use words. Instead of asking 'Do you want juice?' Try asking 'What do you want to drink, juice or milk?'

Expand: Expand what your child says to give him or her a good model

e.g. child: 'That pig'

adult: 'Yes, we used the pink paper to make the pig...'

Copy back: Try to repeat back your child's sounds, word or actions. This shows him or her that you have understood and encourages him or her to try again.

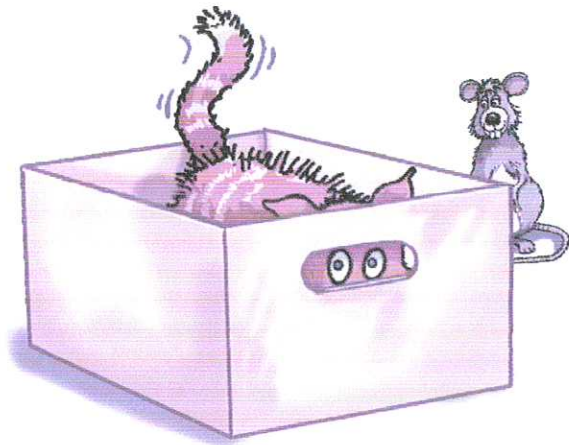
Provide a good model: If your child makes a mistake give them a good model of what they are trying to say

e.g. child: 'that bider runned fast'

adult: 'Yes, **the spider ran** very fast'

Learning to Talk

Learning to talk is one of the most complicated skills we need to learn. Most of us master this effortlessly by the age of two. However for a small number of children learning to talk is much harder.



Talking involves:

- understanding what you hear (understanding)
- having lots of words you can use (vocabulary)
- knowing the right way to put words together (grammar)
- being able to produce speech sounds clearly (speech)
- using words and sentences appropriately in different contexts (social use of language)

A child can have a problem with one or more areas of talking.

Why is it important to identify difficulties?

Speech and language difficulties in children can have far reaching long term implications. Research has shown that a speech or language difficulty can lead to problems learning to read, write and take in information. Language difficulties also impact on a pupil's ability to interact with adults and peers and make and maintain friendships. Early identification and support can prevent later problems with learning and social development.

The good news.....

Research has shown that parents are not responsible for causing speech and language delays. However by changing the way they talk and listen to their child, parents can make a big difference.

Your child's school checks all pupils' understanding of language when they start school. With early intervention and support from home most children can overcome their speech and language difficulties.

How can parents help?

Children learn to talk and produce clear speech by listening to people around them. It may sound simple but the more you talk to your child the better. If they make a mistake give them a good model of what they are trying to say

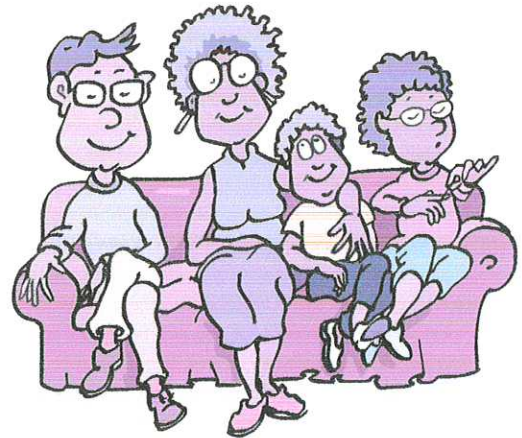
e.g. child: 'Him runned fast'
adult: 'Yes **he ran** very fast'

Here are a few other tips for talking



- ★ Encourage all your child's attempts to communicate. Talking is just one way. Actions, pointing, pulling faces even crying are all ways in which a child can tell you something.
- ★ Watch you child carefully and listen to him or her.
Give your child plenty of time to say something in whatever way he or she can.
- ★ Repeat back your child's sounds, words or actions. This lets your child know that you have understood and encourages him or her to try again.
- ★ Slow down. If you slow your own speech down by leaving a few extra pauses your child will find it easier to keep up.
- ★ Give your child plenty of time to talk. Try not to jump in with questions. A direct question puts a child under pressure to give an answer. This can make the child feel very uncomfortable. If you pause, your child will often try to fill the pauses.
- ★ Repeat words and instructions for your child. Young children need to hear instructions and words lots of times.
- ★ Give your child choices to encourage them to use words. Instead of asking 'do you want juice?' Try asking 'What do you want to drink, juice or milk?'
- ★ Expand what your child says e.g. child: 'duck duck' you could say: 'yes it's a big yellow duck.'
- ★ Explain the meaning of new words as you go along. A child needs to hear new words lots and lots of times in different contexts and situations before he or she will remember the word and use it

Language skills and television



Will watching children's TV help my child's talking to develop?

In order to learn to talk children need to interact with people who can already talk. In early conversations children will try new words, sounds or sentence structures and get feedback from the listener's reaction. This encourages the child to try more new things and builds up his or her confidence in communicating.

Television cannot do this for a child. Television does not give the feedback that is vital to help a child learn to talk. It will provide a child with lots of factual information but it will not help his or her talking.

TV is part of modern living and although it does not help your child learn to talk you can always use it as something to talk about.

Try to watch with your child so that you can talk about what is happening or what your child thinks will happen next.

Talking requires good listening skills so if your child has a speech or language difficulty try to reduce the amount of background noise. You could try turning off any music or TV to make some quiet time each day and use it to talk to your child in a quiet place.

Encourage your child to listen out for noises in the environment e.g. clock ticking, cars outside, birds singing etc.