

# Let's Get Talking!

Here are a collection of activities which come from a Speech and Language website\*. Whether your child has Speech and Language or not, these games and activities are great for



everyone!

\*[www.interactionsspeechtherapy.co.uk](http://www.interactionsspeechtherapy.co.uk) "Bridge to Learning"

# Games and ideas to support communication skills at home

**Easy, quick and no resources needed**

## Communication skills at home

Stuck in the house?! We know that day-to-day life feels very different for all of us at the moment. Classrooms, play dates and trips out may be on hold for now, but there are so many things that you can do at home that will help your child to use and develop their communication skills while they are not at school.

Language and communication is so important for children's development. Children need to learn how to work with others in groups, ask and answer questions, and use language to get their point across successfully. They also need to grow their vocabulary so they can make connections and be successful with higher level thinking.

We know that it may be daunting to think of ways to achieve this when you are at home. So we have collated this pack of quick, fun and easy activities that you can turn to whenever you need them.

We are encouraging parents and caregivers to spend just 15 minutes a day focussing on language and communication skills – choose a game from the selection in the pack and have fun! The days may feel different, but we guarantee that if you set aside a dedicated 15 minutes a day of “talk time”, it will make all the difference!

Let's get talking!

# What am I?

Collect up several items from around the house and put them in a bag. Choose one, and then give lots of clues to your child about what it is e.g.

- It's a fruit, it's yellow and you can eat it...."Banana!"
- It's long, it has buttons on it, you use it for the TV..."Remote control!"

Swap over so your child has a chance to give the clues

**Extension:** Once they have guessed correctly, ask your child if they can think of something else that matches something about the object e.g.

- Can you think of something else that is yellow?

Skill areas targeted:

- Vocabulary and word skills
- Making links
- Categorisation

# Who am I?

Write the name of a famous person, cartoon character or a family member on a post-it note, label or piece of paper and stick it on to one of the other players so they can't see it, but everyone else can (tucking it into a hat works quite well!)

The player then has to ask questions to work out who they are e.g. • Am I a boy or a girl?

- Am I on telly?
- What kind of hair do I have?

Make this easier by giving the person clues instead of getting them to ask questions e.g.

- You are a man
- You give people presents
- You come down the chimney....."Santa!"

Make this harder by setting a maximum number of questions before they have to guess e.g. 20

Skill areas targeted:

- Listening
- Asking questions
- Making links

# Simon Says

The leader ('Simon') stands opposite the group. The leader gives instructions to the rest of the group and everyone has to do what 'Simon' says e.g.

- "Simon says...clap your hands"
- "Simon says...rub your tummy"

BUT, if the leader does not say "Simon says..." before their instruction, then you must not copy them (e.g. "Spin around") Try to catch each other out!

Be creative with your instructions to keep the children interested e.g. •

"Simon says...go and wiggle your bum in the kitchen"

- "Simon says...put your socks on your hands"

Make this game easier by using actions instead of verbal instructions e.g.

- "Simon says...do this" (then show the child what to do)

Make this game harder by giving two, or three, instructions at the same time e.g.

- "Simon says...blink your eyes then wave your hands"
- "Simon says...go to the bedroom and get a toy, then come back and jump up and down" Skill areas targeted:
  - Listening
  - Following directions
  - Memory and recall

## Category Hunt

Give your child a pencil and a paper. Fold the paper in half and then half again to make four sections.

At the top of each section, write a colour. Then go hunting round the house and garden for things in those colour categories.

As the children find items, they will write the words in the appropriate section of the paper (or the adult does if they can't yet write)

You can use any sort of category for this game e.g.:

- Things that are round
- Things that move
- Things that are alive
- Things that are plastic
- Things that are soft

If you don't have paper and a pen, just collect up the items together into a pile.

**Extension activity:** Once you have found all the items in the category, try to remember where you found them and put them back (Where does the pillow go? Where was the leaf? Where did we find the folder?) Skill areas targeted:

- Vocabulary and word skills
- Answering WH – questions
- Memory and recall

## Hangman

Choose a word and make the appropriate number of spaces near your hangman.

The child guesses a letter. If that letter is in your word, write it in the appropriate space. If the letter is not in the word, draw part of the hangman's

body. Guess the word before the man is complete to win the game!

Try drawing different things for variations of the same game e.g. Snowman, Fireman, Stickman, Flower...anything you want!

Adapt the words to your child's literacy level – use simple short words for younger children (e.g. cat, sun, bed) and more ambitious language for older children.

Giving and receiving clues helps to strengthen children's linking skills and word skills e.g. it's a fruit, it's a describing word, it's somewhere you sleep, it means the same as \_\_\_\_\_, it has 4 legs etc. Skill areas targeted:

- Sound awareness
- Vocabulary and word skills

## Sequencing

Sequencing is a great skill to target in your everyday routines with you children:

- While your child is getting dressed, ask what he/she would like to put on first, second, third, etc. This activity is fun because you can get dressed in a different order each day! Recap what you did: First you put on a t-shirt, then you put on a skirt, last you put on your pants.

- Having a bath: Talk through the sequence as you are doing it e.g. First we need to run the water, then we need to get a towel ready, then take off clothes etc. Pretend you have forgotten how to do it and ask your child to tell you what to do at each step in the process

Other Activities: making a drink, baking, washing clothes, brushing teeth, gardening, washing dishes

For older children, use more complex sequences e.g. following a recipe, how to play a game, how to make a birthday card

Skill areas targeted:

- Sequencing
- Giving instructions

## What's missing?

Place a group of common objects on a table and give your child a few



moments to study the collection. After your child has studied the group of objects, ask them to close their eyes or turn around. Remove one of the objects and ask your child to look at the group of objects again and tell you what's missing.

If they cannot tell you, then encourage them to ask for clues... What colour was it?, Was it big or little?, was it soft or hard?

Make this activity easier by

- decreasing the number of objects that you put out
- choosing items that are very different in size and shape

Make this activity harder by

- increasing the number of objects that you put out
- choosing items that are similar in size and shape
- shortening the time that your child has to view the collection
- re-arranging the collection as well as removing an object. Skill areas targeted:
  - Memory and recall
  - Concentration
  - Asking questions
  - Vocabulary and Word skills

## What's Different?

Put on lots of different accessories/clothing items e.g. hat, belt, scarf, sunglasses, and jewellery

Have your child study you for a few moments, then walk out of the room and change something about your appearance. Return and ask your child to guess what is different about you.

Keep it obvious for young children, like taking off your shoes and socks, putting on or taking off a hat, putting your shirt on backwards. For older children you can be more subtle.

If they are unsure, encourage them to ask you questions to get a clue e.g. Was it on your head? Was it a piece of jewellery?

Let the child have a chance to be the one who changes.

Skill areas targeted:

- Memory and recall
- Concentration
- Asking questions

## Scavenger Hunt

Give your child a list of items to find around the house/garden. The list may be written, in pictures, or given verbally. Time your child to see how quickly they can find everything on the list. Try to beat your time the next go!

Don't just ask for a list of things, be creative to make your child think and use their language skills. An example list could be:

Go and find me:

- Something from the bathroom
- Something that is red
- Something that is fluffy
- Something I can read
- Something with numbers on it

If your child can't read, or this is too much information for them to handle all at once, then break it down into smaller lists. They could go and find things one at a time, or two at a time, or you could ask for several things from the same category e.g. Find me 3 things that make a noise

Skill areas targeted:

- Vocabulary and word skills
- Following directions
- Memory and recall

## Obstacle Course

Set up an obstacle course using couch cushions and chairs. Tell your child to go e.g. under the table, over the cushion and around the chair. You can expand this as much as you want to include other furniture/household/garden

objects and more complex prepositions (e.g. between, through, inside, behind, in front)

You may have to demonstrate the route first, especially if your child is not yet sure of their prepositions – this is a really fun way to learn!

Take turns to be the obstacle course designer - let your child set up an obstacle course and encourage him/her to use different prepositions when giving directions to you. Skill areas targeted:

- Prepositions
- Following directions
- Giving instructions

## Feely Box

Place a common object in a box and cover it with a cloth. Let your child put their hand under the cloth and feel the object. After your child has felt the object, ask them to guess what it is. If they guess it easily, ask them to tell you how they know that is what it is. You can use prompts such as:

- What shape is it?

- Is it hard or soft
- Is it big or little
- What can you do with it?
- Is it wet or dry?
- Which room of the house do you think it's from?

You can also use these prompts to help if your child is finding it hard to guess what is inside.

**Extension:** A listening box is similar to a feely box. You place an object in a closed box or bag. This time, you reach in and make a noise with the object – the child uses his/her sense of hearing to hear what's inside the box. For younger children, use objects that have obvious, distinctive noises. Use more subtle noises for older children.

Skill areas targeted:

- Concentration
- Vocabulary and word skills
- Listening skills

## Walking talking games

Here are some easy talking games to play while you are out on a walk:

1. **I went to the shop...:** The first person starts the list by saying “I went to the shop and I bought...an apple”. The next person carries on “I went to the shop and I bought...an apple and a cake”. Then the next “I went to the shop and I

bought...an apple, a cake and some chocolate". Carry on until someone can't remember the full list.

2. **Alphabet game:** Choose a category, then try to name something from that category from every letter in the alphabet starting from A e.g. ANIMALS = "alligator, bear, camel, dog...", FOODS = "apple, biscuit, carrot..."

3. **The Farmer's Cat:** Similar to the alphabet game, but using descriptive language e.g. The farmers cat is an angry cat, the farmers cat is a bossy cat, the farmers cat is a clever cat...

4. **Five senses:** Talk about what is going on around you in the environment, working your way through the 5 senses i.e. What can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you touch? What can you taste?

5. **Stomp a sentence:** Have a conversation together, but when you are talking you have to stomp forward one step for every word in your sentence, like a dinosaur stomping through the jungle e.g. "I – can – see - a – little - dog – over – there". "Oh – yeh – so – can – I!"

6. **Sound tennis:** Players agree on an initial sound, say 'p', and then take turns back and forth, each saying a new word that begins with that sound, until the round comes to a finish when one player cannot think of a new word beginning with the nominated sound. The 'winner' chooses the new sound for the next round.

## Outdoor Sound Hunt

Use your listening skills to distinguish between different sounds outside. Before you go for a walk, think about all the different things you might hear and make a list. Stop to listen regularly on your walk. When you hear the sounds, tick them off! Add new sounds that you hear that you didn't think of before onto your list so that you can listen for those next time.

Think about how you can describe the sounds e.g.

- Duck – quack
- Train – choo choo
- Thunder – boom boom boom splatt
- Rain – tshhhhhh, or dlopp dlopp dlopp
- Bee – zzzzz
- Birds – too too doo doo (bird sound)
- Dog bark – ruff
- Footsteps – plod, plod, plod
- Leaves – rustle rustle
- Rooster – cockadoodledoo

## Indoor sound hunt

There are lots of noises going on inside too!

- Clock – tick tock
- Computer keys – tap tap tap
- People – chatter chatter
- Kettle – blubblle blubblle blubblle
- Phone – ring ring

Skill areas targeted:

- Concentration
- Listening skills

## Ball games

There are lots of ways to get language into ball games:

- Ask a question and throw the ball to the person who has to answer, then ask the next person etc.
- Name a category (e.g. kitchen utensils, countries, animals) then throw the ball around the circle and whoever has the ball has to come up with one thing in that category until you run out
- Think of as many different things as possible that you can do with the ball and act them out: bounce, throw, roll, dribble, shoot, kick, catch. This builds action word vocabulary and lateral thinking i.e. Could you push the ball? Could you cuddle the ball?
- Use descriptive vocabulary: bounce it *high* or *low*, throw it *fast* or *slow*, shoot it *gracefully* or *eagerly*. You can adapt the language to any level.

## Photographs

Children love to look at photographs of themselves and the people who are important to them.

**Old photographs:** Show your child some old photographs. Tell them about the occasion, and who the people are (e.g. This was taken the day you were born. This is your brother holding you). Then talk about the picture some more and see if they can make links based on what you have told them e.g.

- Where do you think we are in the picture? (hospital? home?)
- How do you think Sam is feeling? (excited, happy, nervous)



**New photographs:** Take pictures of you and your children doing things around the house, in the garden, or out on a walk. At the end of the day, look at the pictures together and talk about what you did that day. Recap the events using sequencing language such as “first”, “next”, “then” (e.g. First we did some Maths, next we played tig in the garden, then we made chicken for dinner.) Talk about how you felt, talk about the best part of the day and the worst part of the day.

Skill areas targeted:

- Talking about feelings
- Narrative (talking about what happened)
- Sequencing

## I Spy

This classic game is really good for developing sound awareness skills in children:

“I spy with my little eye, something beginning with...’t”

It can be adapted in lots of ways for different abilities:

- “I spy with my little eye, something that is high up” (bird)
- “I spy with my little eye, something that *ends* with ‘g’” (dog)
- “I spy with my little eye, something very hot” (sun)
- “I spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with billow” (pillow)

Skill areas targeted:

- Vocabulary and word skills
- Sound awareness skills
- Observations and concentration skills

## Ongoing Story

In this activity you will make up a story together

Decide who your story is going to be about – this could be a favourite toy, or a famous person, or a made up character.

The adult starts by providing a good opener for the story e.g. “It was a dark night and the goblin was looking for food in the forest...”

Then the next person adds one sentence onto the story, and so on until someone ends the story with “The End”.

Your story can be as long or as short as you like. The whole family can take turns to add the next sentence to the story.

Make this activity easier by using some objects as prompts. For example you might get out a fork, a teddy bear and an action man. These will give the children ideas for what could come next in the story.

The story doesn't have to make perfect sense, but try to encourage everyone to make one idea link to the next if they can.

Skill areas targeted:

- Prediction
- Attention and Listening
- Narrative and sequencing
- Imagination and creativity

## Books and Stories

Books and stories are an endless tool for developing language. Here are a few different activities that use stories to build communication skills:

• **Simple story time:** 15 minutes a day reading a book with your child will have a huge impact on their language development. Stories are where children discover lots of new vocabulary, learn how events link together, learn to predict actions and emotions, and gain ideas that feed their imagination. Read together and stop every so often to ask:

- o What do you think might happen next?
- o How is this character feeling?
- o What does this word mean?

- **Story Bingo:** Read a little bit ahead in the book, and give each child a specific word/person/place to listen out for. When they hear their word, they must shout “bingo”, or hit an imaginary buzzer to stop you reading. Then give them another word, and so on.
  
- **Freeze Story:** Like Story Bingo, except this time your child can dance around or jump on the bed, then they must freeze when they hear the word they are listening for.
  
- **Next Word Please:** Read the story aloud but stop at random spots to let your child guess what word they think comes next e.g. “The giant’s kingdom was full of...?” It doesn’t matter if it’s right or not, the more imaginative the idea the better!
  
- **Voice Changer:** Take turns reading or retelling the story using a different voice. Children love this! Some examples of voices are: high, low, squeaky, baby, growl, cowboy, witch, under water, out of breath, pirate etc.
  
- **Same Story/New Words:** Read a familiar story together, but when you get to key parts you can make a change e.g. instead of a farmer make it a policeman, instead of going to space they go to the beach etc. Let your child’s imagination go wild and create their very own version of the story.
  
- **Draw/build the story:** Get out some craft materials. This could just be some paper and coloured pencils, or you could have cartons, glue, stickers, cardboard boxes, tissue paper, sellotape etc. Read the story together, then spend some time after drawing and making things related to the story, and talking together about what you are doing. This could include:
  - o Drawing one of the characters: talk about what they look like, what they are wearing, what they might say, what items they might have with them, where they might be etc.
  - o Drawing a comic strip of the main events of the story
  - o Drawing a particular

scene from the story o Building or making something from the story

Skill areas targeted:

- Vocabulary
- Prediction
- WH-questions
- Attention and Listening
- Narrative and sequencing
- Imagination and creativity

## Sound games

Listening for sounds and playing with sounds has huge benefits for children's language development and for their literacy skills.

- **Change my name:** Write down lots of different letters on separate pieces of paper (M, Ch, L, T etc). Write your child's name down, then cover up the first letter with the different sounds and see what you get! Sam...Tam, Bam, Lam, Jam
- **Rhyme it:** While out walking, or while getting ready for bed have your child name something she/he sees. Your job will be to think of a rhyming word for the word your child said. For example, if your child says, *car*, you might say *far*. If you get stuck, make up silly rhymes and have fun, like *pyjamas* and *myjamas*. Older children can make the rhymes for themselves – think of as many different rhyming words as you can

• **Slow talking:** Have fun with your child playing a slow talking game. This will give them skills in blending words together. You can do this anywhere anytime even while you wash dishes! You say a word slowly, *h-o-t-d-o-g* (say each sound slowly, not the names of the letters). Can your child guess the word you said? Start with short words such as *m-a-n* and then move to longer words. Your child will want a turn playing the slow talking game. By giving them a chance to say the sounds in a word *s-l-o-w-l-y* they are learning a new skill called sound “segmenting”. If your child forgets some sounds in the word, the game can become funny because you will guess a word based only on the sounds you heard. If your child says *b-oo-m* for the word *broom*, you would guess “boom”.

• **Spot the change:** Sing a familiar song, poem, rap. Leave out the rhyming words and let your child fill it in. Change the rhyming words to something silly and see if your child can spot the change.

## WH-question quiz

Who? Where? What? When? Why?

WH-questions form the basis of how we understand the world. Sit down for 15 minutes and have a WH-question quiz. You could do “fingers on the buzzers” quick fire style quiz, or write answers on a piece of paper and check the answers after. Here is a list of questions to choose from to get you started, but you can use any question that starts with Who, Where, What, When or Why!

**When?** 1. When do we sleep? (at night) 2. When do we eat breakfast? (in the morning) 3. When do we take a bath? (when we're dirty or before bed) 4. When do we wear sunglasses? (when it's sunny outside) 5. When do we put on a plaster? (when we're cut or bleeding) 6. When do we use an umbrella? (when it's raining) 7. When do we need to wear a coat? (when it's cold outside) 8. When do we wear a swimming costume? (when we go swimming) 9. When do we wear a seatbelt? (when riding in a car) 10. When do we need a torch? (when it is dark) 11. When do we go to

a doctor? (when we are sick) 14. When do you go to the beach? (when its sunny) 15. When is your birthday?

**Who?** 1. Who puts out fires? (firefighter) 2. Who do we go see when we're sick? (doctor) 3. Who takes care of animals at the zoo? (zookeeper) 4. Who teaches kids at school? (teacher) 5. Who delivers the mail? (postman) 6. Who checks our teeth? (dentist) 7. Who helps people in the shop? (shopkeeper) 8. Who takes care of sick animals? (vet) 9. Who has a job of cutting people's hair? (hairstylist or barber) 10. Who flies an airplane? (pilot)

**Why?** 1. Why do we put petrol in a car? 2. Why does a giraffe have a long neck? 3. Why do we mow the grass?

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4. Why do we wear sunglasses? 5. Why do we have a bath? 6. Why do we use an umbrella? 7. Why does a bird have wings? 8. Why do we have teeth? 9. Why do we wear shoes? 10. Why do children go to school?

**What?** 1. What can you wear on your back? (backpack / book bag) 2. What do bees make (that we can eat)? (honey) 3. What do dogs like to chew on? (bones) 4. What do we need when it rains (to keep us dry)? (umbrella) 5. What do we wear on our feet? (shoes or socks) 6. What do cows give us (that we can drink)? (milk) 7. What do spiders build? (web) 8. What is a lawn mower for? (cutting grass) 9. What do we use for eating cereal? (spoon) 10. What does a red light mean? (stop) 12. What do you like to do best when you get home from school? 13. What is one present you have received in the last year? 14. What does your house look like?

**Where?** 1. Where does milk come from? (cows) 2. Where do horses, pigs, and sheep live? (farm) 3. Where do we put a hat? (on our head) 4. Where do we go to buy food? (shop) 5. Where do you sleep? (in a bed) 6. Where do we see clouds? (in the sky) 7. Where do we put toothpaste? (on our

toothbrush) 8. Where do fish live? (in water) 9. Where do we plant seeds? (in the ground / dirt) 10. Where does a bird lay eggs? (in a nest) 11. Where can we play? (outside / playground) 12. Where do socks go? (on your feet/ in the drawer) 13. Where do a king and queen live? (castle / palace) 14. Where can we see monkeys, bears, and elephants? (zoo) 15. Where do bats live? (caves) 16. Where do we go to learn? (school) 17. Where do we bake and cook? (kitchen) 18. Where do we keep milk and butter? (fridge) 19. Where can we sit? (chair / bench / seat)

Skill areas targeted:

- WH-questions

## Conversation starters

We know it can sometimes be difficult to get kids talking. Here is a list of great conversation starters to help kick things off!

What is the favourite thing you own? What is the best meal you've ever had? What makes you feel happy? What is the nicest thing you've ever done for someone else? What things make you laugh? What is the loudest noise you've ever heard? What was the most fun you ever had? What is your favourite movie and why? If you could have any animal as a pet, what would it be and why? What would be the best Halloween costume ever? What are some things you don't like to do and why? What do you like to do in the winter? What do you like to do in the summer? If everyone in your family became an animal what kind would they be? What would you change about yourself if you could change one thing? What has been your favourite holiday and why? If you could have anything you wanted for pudding, what would it be?



**For older children:** If you could meet any human being that has ever lived, who would you want to meet and why? If you won 5 million pounds in the lottery, what would you do with your money? If you could meet one character from any book, who would you choose? If you could travel anywhere in the world where would you visit and why? If you were given a superpower, what would you choose and why? If a genie granted you three wishes, what would they be? If you had a time travel machine, where would you go and what would you want to see? If a Hollywood producer made a movie about your life, who would play the lead roles? What would the best part of the movie be? The Scariest part? The most boring part? What would you put in a time capsule to be opened in 100 years? What is the weirdest dream you've ever had? What is your favourite season and why? If you could be in a famous band which would it be? What do you like best about yourself and why? In 100 years, how do you think your house would be different? How would you tie your laces if you could only use one arm?

# Speech Sounds

If your child has been working on their speech sounds (i.e. pronunciation), you may have been given a list of words or some pictures to practice when you are at home. Pronunciation is a motor skill, like kicking a ball, which unfortunately means there is no other way to improve except to practice, practice, practice! Children can start to find this boring, so here are some fun ways to encourage them to practice their words. Try to do 5 minute bursts 2-3 times a day:

## Turtle Race

You need at least 2 people for this but you can be the second person if need be.

Have both people sit on their bottoms with their knees up. Each time someone practices a word, they get to move forward one scoot.

Bottom must stay on the ground, no picking it up and jumping.

Whoever gets the furthest in 5 minutes wins.

## Moving Beans or Marbles

Place beans or marbles in a small container. Get a second similar container.

For each practiced word, move one bean or marble to the other container.  
When all the beans/marbles are moved, you're done!

## Put Blocks on a Tower

Each time your child practices a word, give him a block to place on top of the tower, or to add to a lego model. When the tower falls, take the blocks back and start over. See how tall they can make it before it falls.

## Go for a Walk

When you are walking somewhere with your child, get them to practice a word for each step. Try this one when you're walking from the house to the garden, or from the bedroom to the kitchen.

## Tickle Me

Start with your hand on your child's head or toes.

For each word the practice, move slightly closer to their belly. When you get to their belly, tickle like crazy. Then, start over and repeat until the 5 minutes is up.

## Card games

If you have a card based game that your child likes to play, then before you play give them one card for every word they practice. When they have all of the cards, you can play the game!

## Puzzle Pieces

Give your child a puzzle piece for every word they practice.

## Hide and seek

Children love searching for things. Hide the pictures that they have to practice around the room. Every time your child finds a picture, practice the word then put it back in the pile. After all the pictures have been found, it's their turn to hide them for you.

## Find a Penny, Pick it Up!

Hide pennies all around the room. As soon as they find one, they put it in a cup and say ten words. Then they get to search for another penny.