

Department of Speech and Language Therapy

'How can I help my child to talk?'

If you would like further information or to make any comments, complaints or suggestions about the service, please contact:

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Advice for parents and carers of preschool children

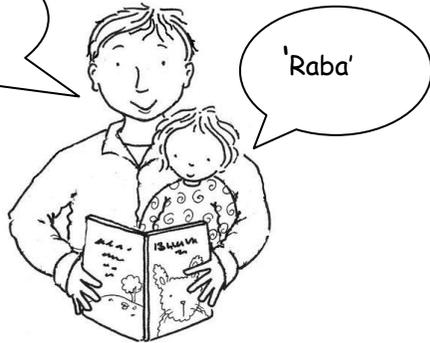
Some General Guidelines

Learning to talk is probably the most complicated thing your child will ever learn to do!

Sometimes, children find it difficult to make the progress we might expect. This can lead to frustration - for children and their parents / carers.

In our experience, parents and carers are already doing many of the right things to help. Some children just need **more** of the right things, and their carers need to **know** that what they are doing is helpful

'A rabbit, Grace, a big rabbit'



We hope that the following advice will reassure and encourage you, so that you can feel confident in giving your child that **extra** bit of help.

Of course, if you still have concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your Speech and Language Therapist.

To help your child to learn the keywords, you will need to:-

REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

As you play with your child, look for opportunities to repeat the keywords over and over again. It may feel a bit unnatural at first, but the results can be well worth the effort. With every repetition, you are giving your child another chance to learn.

Finally, one more golden rule:-

GIVE IT TIME

Your child needs time - to learn words and then to use them. Most children need to feel confident before they try out a new skill in public! So try to be patient. Your job is to say the words and let your child listen. Give plenty of opportunities, and when your child is ready, he / she will say them too.

As you talk about your child's play, it will help if you:-

EMPHASIZE THE KEYWORDS

Keywords are the words that you want your child to listen to and learn. They are the important words in the sentence; the ones that give information about objects, actions and descriptions. If we draw attention to them by using a fun-sounding voice and lots of facial expression, we help children to recognise and remember them.

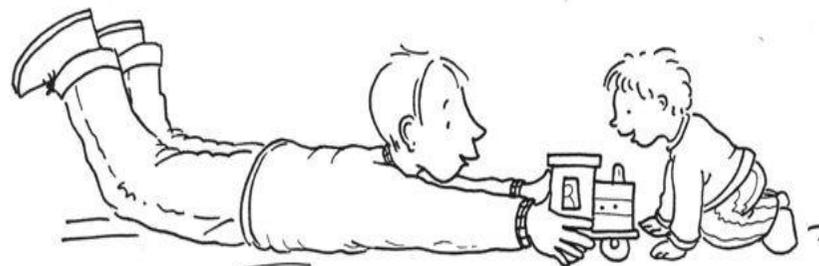


The first (and perhaps the most important) golden rule is:-

HAVE FUN TOGETHER !

We know that children learn best when they are relaxed and having a good time.

So try to forget about 'teaching'.



Let your child choose a favourite activity, then join in and play together.

Concentrate on the things that your child does well, and reward his / her efforts with a big smile!

As you and your child play together, it will help if you:-

GIVE A COMMENTARY

Talk about what your child is doing, and what he / she is playing with. When we talk about what is happening **then and there**, we make the words meaningful - and memorable - for our children.



As you talk about your child's activities, you will need to:-

SLOW DOWN AND SIMPLIFY

Adults talk so fast! Sometimes, we must sound as if we are using a foreign language: where does one word end and the next one begin? If we slow down and use only a few words at a time, children get a chance to listen, hear individual words, and learn them.

You will also need to:-

STOP, WAIT AND LISTEN

You need to listen as well. So keep your commentary short and simple. Leave pauses and give your child plenty of time to join in the conversation. He / she may not be ready to say anything just yet, but unless we **WAIT** and **LISTEN**, we'll never know!