

## TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The charity 'I can' in association with 'Primary Talk' have put together some tips to support your child's speech and language development, also including their understanding of language.

For more details and activity ideas you may wish to visit the 'I Can' or 'Primary Talk' websites. To start with, we have compiled the advice for 2-3 year olds and 3-4 year olds for you to use at home to give your children the very best start with their speech and language development.



[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

**This is a guide to how children develop speech and language between 2 and 3 years.**

**Children develop skills at different rates, but by 3 years usually children will:**

- Listen to and remember simple stories with pictures
- Understand longer instructions, such as 'make teddy jump' or 'where's mummy's coat?'
- Understand simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions
- Use up to 300 words
- Put 4 or 5 words together to make short sentences, such as 'want more juice' or 'he took my ball'
- Ask lots of questions. They will want to find out the name of things and learn new words

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- Use action words such as 'run' and 'fall' as well as words for the names of things,
- Start to use simple plurals by adding 's', for example 'shoes' or 'cars'
- Use a wider range of speech sounds. However, many children will shorten longer words, such as saying 'nana' instead of 'banana'. They may also have difficulty where lots of sounds happen together in a word, e.g. they may say 'pider' instead of 'spider'
- Often have problems saying more difficult sounds like sh, ch, th and r. However, people that know them can mostly understand them
- Now play more with other children and share things
- Sometimes sound as if they are stammering or stuttering. They are usually trying to share their ideas before their language skills are ready. This is perfectly normal at this age, just show you are listening and give them plenty of time. It's not helpful to draw attention to their 'stammering' by saying things like 'take your time'. Just try to be patient and not interrupt them.

### How to Support Your Child

There are lots of things you can do to encourage children at this stage:

- Adding words to children's sentences can show them how words fit together. For example, if a child says, 'dolly hair' you can say 'brush dolly's hair'
- Often children enjoy helping. Sharing daily jobs gives a chance to talk about objects and actions
- Use puppets and pictures to help children listen to stories. Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once. Repetition helps children to understand and remember words
- Give children the correct example for sounds and words. This helps if they are having problems saying a certain word or sound. If you correct them or make them say it again, you

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can make them feel anxious. Simply repeat what they have said using the right words and sounds. With time they will be able to do it themselves.

### Things to Look Out For

For some children, developing communication skills can be very difficult. It is important that parents seek advice from a speech and language therapist if:

- A child points or shows what they want rather than says it.
- They only say single words instead of joining words together into short sentences.
- They are slow to respond to your instructions.
- They rely on being shown what to do rather than being told.
- You cannot understand most of what they say.

**Children at 3 to 4 years will usually be actively learning language and asking many questions.**

**Children develop skills at different rates, but by 4 years usually children will:**

- Listen to longer stories and answer questions about a storybook they have just read
- Understand and often use colour, number and time related words, for example, 'red' car, 'three' fingers and 'yesterday / tomorrow'
- Start to be able to answer questions about 'why' something has happened, although this still might be at quite a basic level
- Use longer sentences and link sentences together

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- Describe events that have already happened, even if their sentences aren't exactly like adults' e.g. 'we went park'
- Enjoy make-believe play
- Start to like simple jokes even if they don't understand them
- Ask many questions using words like 'what' 'where' and 'why'
- Still make mistakes with tense such as say 'runned' for 'ran' and 'swimmed' for 'swam'
- Have difficulties with a small number of sounds - for example r, w, l, f, th, sh, ch and j
- Start to be able to plan games with others.

### How to Support Your Child

There are lots of things you can do to encourage children at this stage:

- Have a special time to talk about the day. Talking about what has happened that day will help their memory skills. It will also help them to talk about things they cannot see and things that happened in the past which is an important skill for learning in school
- Wherever possible, use pictures, objects, puppets, acting, gestures and facial expressions. This will keep a child's interest
- Talk about or play games involving opposites like 'on and off' or 'big and little'
- Join a child in pretend play. Let them take the lead. This will help their language and creativity. Talk about what they are saying and doing rather than asking lots of questions. Your commentary helps their language skills and shows you are listening and interested
- Reversing roles can be great fun for a child. Let them be the 'mummy' or the 'teacher'. This helps them to talk about new situations
- Play with and talk about sequences of coloured bricks or shapes, numbers and days of the week.

### Things to Look Out For

## TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

By 3 and a half years old a child should be understood by people outside the family. If not, parents should seek advice from a speech and language therapist.

You should be concerned if:

- They are struggling to turn ideas into sentences
- The language they use is jumbled and difficult to understand
- They are unresponsive or slow to follow instructions.