



Speech and Language

Early Development and Communication

Parent/Carer guide

Supporting Children with Speech and Language Difficulties in the Early Years

Some children in the Early Years may experience difficulties with speech, language and communication. This can affect how they understand others, express themselves and join in with everyday activities. While these difficulties can vary from child to child, they can have a significant impact on confidence, relationships and learning.

What It Might Look Like

- Struggling to find the right words or putting sentences together.
- Limited vocabulary compared to peers.
- Difficulty following instructions, especially if they contain more than one step.
- Relying on gestures or facial expressions instead of spoken words.
- Avoiding speaking in groups or withdrawing from conversation.
- Becoming frustrated or upset when not understood.
- Having trouble joining in play because of communication challenges.

How It Might Make a Child Feel

- Frustrated when they can't make themselves understood.
 - Anxious or reluctant to join group activities.
 - Isolated from peers during play.
 - Lacking confidence in speaking situations.
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Things You Can Do at Home:

1. Talk Together Throughout the Day

- Narrate what you're doing as you go about your day, for example, "I'm pouring the milk into your cup" or "Let's put on your red shoes."
- Give your child time to respond, even if it's with a sound or gesture.
- Encourage turn-taking in conversations, listening as they respond to you.

2. Read and Share Stories

- Read with your child every day, even if just for a few minutes. You can practise taking turns to turn the pages.
- Talk about the pictures, characters and what might happen next.
- Use lots of expression and vary your voice to make it fun and engaging.

3. Sing Songs and Rhymes

- Sing nursery rhymes, action songs and familiar tunes together. These support children's phonological awareness and build their vocabulary.
- Add actions or props to make songs more interactive.

4. Play Together

- Follow your child's lead and join in their play. Sit at their level during interactions.
- Use pretend play to act out simple stories, such as cooking dinner or going to the shops.
- Introduce new words during play – for example, "Look, the car is zooming fast!"

5. Give Them Choices

- Offer choices using words – for example, "Do you want the blue cup or the red cup?"

Things You Can Do at Home Continued:

6. Listen and Respond

- Give your child time to respond.
- You can expand on what your child has said by adding simple and clear new words. For example, if they say “dog,” you might say, “Yes, it’s a big brown dog!”

7. Keep It Fun and Positive

- Celebrate their attempts to communicate - this might be eye contact, smiles and gestures.
- If your child says something incorrectly, model the correct version without pressure. For example, if they say “I runned,” you could say, “Yes, you ran!”

8. Dummies

- Dummies reduce opportunities for talking.
- If a dummy is in their mouth whilst attempting to talk, it can impact how their tongue moves, which can make certain speech sounds harder to produce clearly with prolonged use.

9. Aim for a balance around screen time

- Children learn best through hands-on experiences.
- Prioritise language-rich real-life interactions such as outdoor activities, reading and conversations.

Remember, you don’t need special equipment or a lot of time. Every day moments are perfect opportunities for helping your child develop their speech, language and communication skills. The most important thing is to talk, listen and enjoy spending time together.



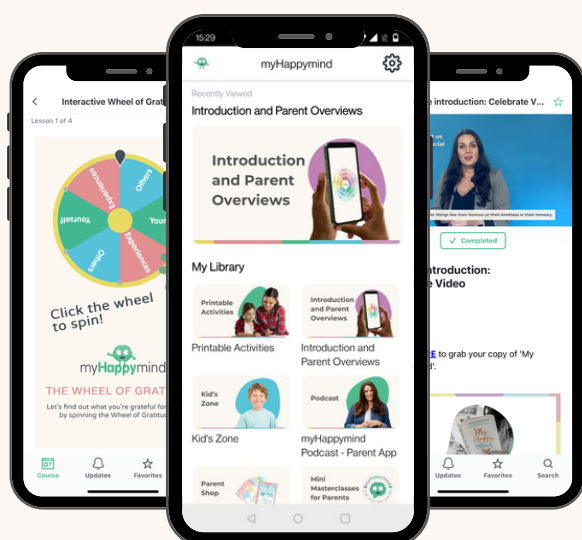
How myHappymind Can Support You

In school, myHappymind supports children's speech, language and communication skills through songs, interactive stories, fun games, 'Time to Chat' discussions and engaging activities. These help children build vocabulary, practise speaking and listening and grow in confidence when expressing themselves.

As a parent, you also have access to these powerful tools through the myHappymind Parent App. At home, you can enjoy:

- Stories to spark imagination, expand vocabulary and encourage discussion.
- Games that make learning new words and concepts exciting.
- Songs to introduce rhythm, rhyme and language patterns in a fun way.
- Conversation cards to help you start meaningful chats with your child.

By using these resources alongside everyday talking, reading and playing, you can help your child develop the strong communication skills they need for life.



**If you haven't already,
download the parent app to
access the resources by
scanning the QR code below...**



YOU WILL NEED THIS AUTHENTICATION CODE TO SIGN UP



**If you have any questions, contact us at
hello@myhappymind.org or 01625 447547.**

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