

Communication and Language in Early Years

Effective communication and language development are crucial components your little ones early years. These skills serve as the foundation for their learning, social interaction, and emotional development. As children grow, their ability to communicate and understand language plays a part in their cognitive abilities, relationship building, and overall well-being.

Language development begins long before you hear their first word. Babies will communicate through cries, coos, and gestures, which are crucial stages in language development. It is vital that babies have exposure to a language-rich environment from birth as this builds cognitive growth and helps your little one hear and begin to learn sounds and words.

Communication and Language Milestones

Here are some typical milestones your little one should be meeting and at what age, there are more than the few listed but these are just guidelines

Birth to 11 months

- Turns to sound and locates accurately
- Stops and looks at own name
- Makes sounds through babbling
- Copies facial movements
- Mouths objects
- Uses B, D, G, M, N and W sounds

8-20 months

- Easily distracted by noise
- Can find own facial features when asked
- Uses 10-20 single words
- Speech may be difficult to understand
- Uses eye gaze to make a request

16-26 months

- Focuses on activity of own choice
- Understands action words
- Begins to put 2 words together
- Enjoys stories and rhymes
- Uses F, SH, S sounds

22-36 months

- Understands simple Who, what, where questions
- Has up to 300 words,
- Links 3-4 words together
- Uses question words
- Uses language to express thoughts and feelings
- All vowel sounds are present and uses S, F, SH,

30-50 months

- Listens to stories with attention and recall
- Understands 3 key word instructions
- Links 4-6 words together
- Initiates conversations
- Mostly understood in speech

40-60 months

- More understood in conversation
- Has confidence to communicate
- increasing use of imagination
- Uses question words How and When.

Benefits of Building Early Communication and Language Skills

Develops Cognitive Development

When your little ones engage in conversations, listening to stories, listen to rhymes it helps stimulate their brain activity, enhances their memory and promotes their attention and listening.

Supports Social Interaction

Communication and language are vital to building social interaction. Children learn to express their feelings and understand others' emotions; this is key to building relationships.

Develop Emotional Development

Having a good level of language skills allows your little one to express their needs and emotions, this is crucial in reducing frustration and promoting self-regulation. It also enables them to understand and respond to others' emotions effectively.

Support Literacy Skills

Having language skills are important for supporting literacy skills as your little one grows and moves through early years into school. Being exposed to language rich environments helps children recognise letters, sounds, and words, which are essential for reading and writing when they move through to school.

Statistics

Statistics show that in the 2023/24 academic year the number of speech delays in children starting school was 49.5%. This is half of children within the local area starting school with a speech delay.

Ways to promote Communication and Language

Create a Language-Rich Environment

Expose children to a variety of words and sounds from an early age. Read books, sing songs, and engage in conversations to stimulate their language skills. NEVER question your little one, make comments to ensure they are exposed to the language instead of making them say it and putting pressure on them.

Have responsive Interactions

Listen and respond to children's attempts to communicate with enthusiasm. Ensure that you use simple language and engage in back-and-forth conversations, even if it's a baby babbling this is still conversation. Expand on their ideas and provide new vocabulary for example they say "car" comment on the colour of the car and say, "red car".

Encourage Reading

Introducing your little one to books early on and make reading a daily activity helps promote language. Ensure you choose age-appropriate books that meet their interests. Reading together not only promotes language skills but also builds a bond between a care provider and child.

Use Positive Reinforcement

Using praise when your little one reaches a milestone or their efforts to communicate encourages them to keep trying, praising their attempts to use new words and phrases builds on their confidence and encourages them to keep trying.

Play

Ensure you make time to spend with your little one daily where you put away all devices and solely focus on playing with your little one. Use language when playing and comment on your play and allow them to choose activities. Playing with your little one offers many opportunities to practice communication skills. Role-playing, storytelling, and games that involve following instructions can hugely enhance language development.