



Top 10 toys for the development of communication skills

There are lots of ways that you can support the development of your child's communication skills. Having fun with your child is a really helpful way of encouraging them to talk and pay attention. Try having time with them every day without any background noise (e.g. TV) and try modelling correct speech rather than correcting their mistakes. Playing and having time together is really important, and you can use any toys or games that you have already at home.

There are some toys and games that can be particularly helpful for supporting communication. We have listed our top 10 toys for the development of communication skills below.

Imaginative play

Dressing up clothes, doll's houses, teddy/dolly tea sets, Playmobile/Happyland... you can use any of these toys to join in with your child's imaginative play. It will help you expand their language beyond what they can immediately see and develop their creativity. Try to comment on what they are saying and doing rather than asking lots of questions. This not only reinforces their language skills, but also shows them that you are interested and listening to them.

Messy play

Messy play helps with sensory exploration and can be used to develop language skills. Things like water play, sand play, chalk boards, finger painting and playdough all help children to develop their awareness of different sensations and can be used to talk about actions e.g. pour, squash, squeeze, pull, rub, as well as describing different colours and textures.

Inset Puzzles

You can use these puzzles to help your child build their early vocabulary. Start by commenting on the piece that they are putting in, then move on to giving them the choice "do you want the car or the fish?" before encouraging them to ask for what they want by saying, "which piece do you want now?"

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Visit this website for information about children's communication.

Listening to CDs

Your child's listening and attention skills are crucial for learning language. You can use listening to CDs to help build on these, and add information to what they are listening to. For example, if they hear a cockerel crowing, talk to them about farms where you might see a cockerel, the other animals that you might see etc.

Repetitive books

e.g. Dear Zoo, The Gingerbread Man

Help children listen to and enjoy stories. Don't be afraid to tell a story more than once, as repetition helps children to understand and remember the words that they hear. Children love to join in with the bits that they remember and so books that have a repetitive line throughout them are great.

Simple lotto boards

Lotto boards are great for helping children to develop their vocabulary. You can talk to them about the pictures they find, and move on to asking them to tell you about the pictures.

Colour and shape matching and counting games and activities

e.g. Dotty Dinosaurs, Red Dog Blue Dog, marble run, click clack car tracks, Mr Potato Head, Pop up Pirate, Kerplunk, Lego

These types of games will help children learn important words that will be helpful to them in nursery and school. You can play these games together and talk about the colours and shapes that you can see around your home.

Puppets

Puppets are a great way to develop imagination and story-telling skills in children. Make up stories and act them out with puppets, or re-tell familiar stories that you already know.

Sequencing toys

e.g. coloured bricks, threading beads

It is helpful to talk about time and sequences – play with and talk about sequences of coloured bricks or shapes as well as numbers and days of the week to encourage your child with words such as first, next, last, before, after

Board games for turn-taking

Taking turns is an essential communication skill and playing any simple board games that involve taking turns not only helps children to develop this skill, it also helps them to listen and attend to an activity for longer periods of time.

Rhyming lotto, rhyming books

Having fun with words and rhymes can help children learn skills they need for reading and developing literacy. By learning the differences and similarities between word sounds, your child will build the foundations for reading and writing.

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