

Key principles underpinning talk that supports young children's language development

1. **Responding sensitively to children's attempts to communicate**
 Whether with a tiny baby who communicates through smiling, cooing and crying, or an older child who uses talk and gestures, the golden rule is to notice what the child is paying attention to or trying to explain, and develop talk about that. The goal is to communicate and talk **with** the child, as partners who respond to each other.

2. **Observing and commenting on the child's current interest**
 A child's language and thinking will develop through interactions with others, and this arises naturally from a shared activity which provides something of interest to talk about, and gives a clear context for words and meanings.

3. **Talking to children in language they are likely to understand**
 Children's language develops when adults support just one step beyond their current language development. Adults can use a range of techniques to build vocabulary, encourage longer utterances and support use of more complex sentence constructions.
 - **Expansions** – value what the child says by repeating it, and add a little more (eg child says, 'Dolly breakfast'; adult says, 'Yes, dolly is eating breakfast'.
 - **Recasts** – provide a language model by changing what the child has said, without changing the meaning (e.g. child says, 'She goed to her grandma's house'; adult says, 'Yes, she went there, didn't she?') Recasts can model correct grammar, sounds of words, or vocabulary (e.g. child says, 'Want cup' while looking at a glass; adult says, 'You want the glass.')
 - **Open-ended questions** – use questions well to encourage children to respond more fully, and to keep the conversation going.

4. **Taking time**
 Young language learners need time to gather their thoughts to respond to a question and put it into words. Give children enough time, without jumping in to repeat the question or provide the answer or another comment.

TOP TIPS FOR TALKING

A Unique Child who is valued and listened to:

- **Follow the child's lead**
- **Join in with the child's play or mirror their actions.**
- **Focus on what a child is looking at or doing.**
- **Wait and allow the child time to start the conversation.**
- **Take turns to communicate so that adults and children both get a turn at talking.**

Positive Relationships that build and support communication

- **Build up a child's sentences by repeating what they say and adding words.**
- **Give choices to increase vocabulary, eg 'apple or satsuma?'**
- **If a child says something inaccurately, acknowledge what they have said and repeat it back in the correct way.**
- **Share the top tips with parents so that they can do the same at home.**

Enabling Environment with available adults

- **Get down to the child's level – it's easier to talk if you are face to face.**
- **Get a child's attention before you start to talk.**
- **Make sure you use lots of statements and fewer questions.**
- **Try to have a conversation with every child every day.**