

Ready for Babies?

Communication and Language















The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development.

Infants are not born predisposed to speak or understand a certain language. They acquire their vocabulary from what they hear. Research shows a direct connection between the amount of words a young child hears and their future aptitude for learning.

Vocabulary

By the age of 2, babies will typically say between 100 and 200 words. To support this development, it is vital that adults engage in conversation with babies, even though babies do not understand what you are saying, they will feel safe when they hear your calm and reassuring voice. Vary the volume and pitch of your voice too, as babies respond to high and soft voices.

Use:

-  Baby conversation (copy the noise/sound the baby makes and wait for baby to make another sound and repeat, this supports the turn-taking element of conversation)
-  Imitate babies' actions to encourage awareness and attention
-  Face to face activities (Peek a boo) to encourage attention
-  Exaggerate facial expressions
-  Use word alongside object (labelling)
-  Use Makaton throughout session (not just at snack)
-  Use simple phrases repetitively and regularly throughout session
-  Sing rhymes appropriate to timing (Upbeat = play time; slower – rest time)
-  Spontaneous singing of rhymes and songs
-  Comment on baby's actions (Lily's painting)
-  Use singing at routines (when changing nappy)
-  Use interactive songs for older babies to develop looking, active listening, attention and anticipation
-  Use visual prompts to offer choice (song spoons)
-  Staff must tune in to individual babies attempts at communicating



Songs and rhymes are especially good for children as the rhythms and repetitive language make it easier for babies to learn language structures and skills.

Websites for further support:

- [Help for early years providers : Exploring language \(education.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-for-early-years-providers-exploring-language)
- [Words for Life | National Literacy Trust | Words for Life](https://www.wordsforlife.org/)
- [What do we mean by speech, language and communication? | Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust](https://www.nottinghamshire.nhs.uk/what-do-we-mean-by-speech-language-and-communication/)
- [Bilingual quick tips | National Literacy Trust](https://www.wordsforlife.org/bilingual-quick-tips/)

Environment

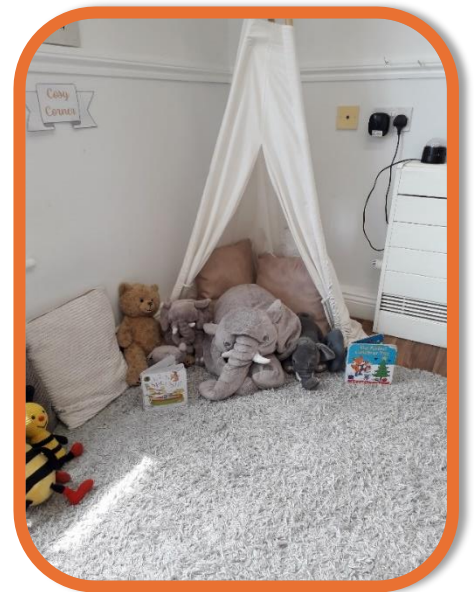
The communication environment should have:

- 👤 Cosy, quiet spaces that provide different experiences and areas to communicate
- 👤 Minimal background noise.
- 👤 Signs, symbols, photographs and writing.
- 👤 Clear and consistent routines
- 👤 Open ended activities that are accessible for children of all language levels.



Open ended resources (Heuristic play and Treasure baskets) support vocabulary, back and forth conversation.

Cosy spaces support communication opportunities. Babies love the sound of adult voices and reading aloud to them can be calming during times of distress or unease. The appearance of their favourite book and book characters can be a very soothing experience and help build a bond between adult and child.



Using hands-on experiences, through simple role play, encourages learning and provides a context for new words to be explored. For example, it's easier for children to learn vegetable names when they are touching or tasting them.

Using the babies interests to encourage vocabulary and role play will support engagement



Websites for further support:

- [10 Ways To Create A Communication Friendly Environment \(earlyyearscreers.com\)](http://earlyyearscreers.com)
- [Creating a communication supportive environment: Early years - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](http://www.speechandlanguageuk.com)
- [Learning & Development, Communication: Part 2 - Friendly places | Nursery World](http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk)
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