



Help Kids Talk and our partners take a collective approach to encouraging the speech, language and communication of our babies, children and young people. We believe everyone within our communities, organisations and settings can play a valuable role in supporting our children's speech, language and communication development.

We know that making small changes can have a big impact and that the best outcomes are achieved when babies, children and young people spend time in environments where values and priorities are conducive to implementing these changes.

## Top Tips for Adult Child Interactions that Promote Speech and Language Communication

Research shows that the positive interactions adults have with babies, children and young people can have a significant impact on their speech, language and communication skills.

Babies and children benefit from being with responsive and enthusiastic adults who take time to engage with them, observe what they are interested in, notice how they are attempting to communicate, and talk with them. We know that positive adult-child interactions are crucial for speech and language development as they provide a nurturing, safe space where babies and children can practice their own communication skills, including their first sounds and words.

So, what can we do to encourage speech, language and communication skills in our babies, children and young people?



- **Follow the child's lead:** Show interest in what the child is interested in by joining in with them and allowing them to take the lead in communication and in play. Children are much more likely to remember and later use the language they hear if they are interested in it!

Allowing children to take the lead in play also builds their confidence, as they see themselves as competent decision makers!

- **Respond to gestures and non-verbal communication:** By paying attention to a baby or child's non-verbal cues and gestures, we can better understand their needs and respond with our own gestures and appropriate spoken language.

*Please see our BITE SIZE SESSION re gestures and signing on our website for more information!*



important to leave gaps when you are talking and wait for them to respond to you in some way. You can then respond again to their noises, babble or movements. This is sometimes referred to as a 'serve and return' interaction, as it's like a game of tennis showing your baby or child that their noises and gestures are important, and that you are waiting and listening for them. e.g. 'that look's like fun!'

As children get older, engaging in conversations with adults teaches them how to take turns speaking, listen attentively, and respond appropriately. It can also build their confidence using language. e.g. 'What do you see?'

- **Be face to face:** Sit at your baby or child's level, so that they can see your face, as this makes it much easier for both of you to pick up on each other's responses.
- **Ask fewer questions and comment more:** Comment on what your child is doing and name objects that your child is looking at. When you do ask questions, try to make them open-ended and then actively listen to your child's responses.
- **Turn-taking and early conversational skills:** As babies are able to listen to what you are saying and respond with either noises or gestures, it's



- **Positive reinforcement:** Respond positively to your baby or child's attempts to communicate as this will encourage them to keep trying. Always acknowledge their efforts to communicate, by gesture, facial expression, sounds or attempts at words.
- **Make language fun!** Take time to engage in pretend play, read books together, sing songs, play games, laugh and most importantly have fun together!



For more information please see our adult child interaction checklist, that you can use to evaluate your own natural strengths and chose one skill that you could work on about adult child interaction, please check out our messages of the month, by following us on Facebook, Instagram or X

Enrol for our FREE monthly 'Basic Awareness' webinar. You can register here:

Help Kids Talk Parents and Caregivers Training  
Help Kids Talk Practitioners Training



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