

Strategies to Develop Expressive Language Skills at Home

Expressive language refers to the words and sentences that your child uses when they communicate with you. Some children may have difficulties expressing themselves clearly, using grammatical sentences, using the correct word order or telling stories in a clear and organised way.

The following strategies can be used at home to help your child develop their expressive language skills:

- When you are chatting with your child, give them lots of time to get their message across. Ask them open-ended questions (those that need more than just a 'yes' or 'no' response) to find out more information. For example, 'what did you do this afternoon?', 'what happened next?' and 'where did you go?'
- Try to avoid correcting your child if they make errors with grammar or word order in their sentences. Instead, model the correct way of saying the sentence. For example, if your child says '**him** went to the park', you might say 'oh wow, **he** went to the park?'
- When modelling sentences, you can also expand on your child's language to show them how to give more information. This is particularly helpful for children in the early stages of expressive language development. For example, if your child says 'boy hiding', you might say 'you're right, the boy is hiding under the bed'.
- If your child is struggling to think of the correct word whilst talking, try asking them a question to find out more about the word. For example, 'what do you do with it?' or 'what does it look like?' If you know the word your child is trying to think of, you could give them the initial sound of the word as a cue e.g. 'it begins with a k...'
- There are lots of simple word games that you can play at home to develop expressive vocabulary. These games are great for car journeys, or to play as part of your daily routine e.g. whilst walking to school, at bath time etc.
 - o I Spy (if needed, give your child extras clues – 'it begins with a 'sh', it's an animal, it lives on a farm')
 - o Category naming – can they think of 5 different words in a category?
 - o Word description game – can they guess a word from your description, and then describe a word for you?
 - o Word association game – can they think of a word which links to the last word they heard? E.g. car – wheel – bus – red – apple – banana
 - o Opposites game – can they think of the opposite of the word you have said? E.g. hot – cold, inside – outside, happy – sad, short – long



- Barrier games are a great way to promote the use of expressive language. These are games where a barrier (a large book/cushion) is placed between the two players so that you cannot see each other's resources, and you both have the same picture/objects in front of you. The players take turns to give each other instructions to complete an activity. Some examples of barrier games you could play at home are:
 - o Building a Lego model
 - o Completing a craft activity e.g. playdough model, making a paper crown
 - o Drawing a simple picture
 - o Battleships game

If you are unsure what your child means when they have given an instruction, ask clarifying questions e.g. 'did you mean...?', 'can you explain it again?'

During reading practice at home, ask your child questions about the story to encourage expressive language use and to check they have understood the story. You could ask them questions to find out more about the picture e.g. 'who is in the story?', 'where are they going?' or encourage them to explain in their own words what is happening in the story.