



BEGINNING TO TALK - FIRST WORDS

Helpful Hints

- ❖ Talking needs to be worthwhile and fun for the child - play and real life will encourage him or her to talk.
- ❖ The child needs to understand words before he or she can begin to use them.
- ❖ Don't worry about pronunciation - clear speech will come later.
- ❖ Talk to the child in a quiet environment, simplifying the language you use. Stick to short simple sentences and keep it relevant to what is happening in the 'here and now'.
- ❖ Name things for the child, rather than asking him or her to name them.
- ❖ Whilst lots of language stimulation is good, make sure the child has the opportunity to talk - make sure that you pause and are looking at him or her as you speak. Give them time to talk.
- ❖ Encourage the child to copy but do not pressurise them to repeat what you say - this may put him or her off trying.
- ❖ Give the child lots of praise, with words and facial expression, when he or she makes an effort to speak.
- ❖ Offer the child choices, which will encourage them to communicate verbally e.g. 'Do you want a drink or a biscuit?'

Activities to Encourage First Words

- ❖ Spend 10 or 15 minutes a day in a play situation specifically using short simple sentences that relate to the activity.
e.g. 'Teddy jumping', 'more drink', 'car fall down' - use lots of repetition.
- ❖ Make repetitive comments about everyday objects/daily activities.



e.g. Ball: 'Here's the ball', 'Roll the ball' etc.
Bath time: 'Where are your feet?', 'Wash feet'



- ❖ Encourage the child to listen to and copy various noises.
e.g. Animal noises, car noises, fire engine, water sounds etc.
- ❖ Use everyday activities as a chance to use simple language with the child.
e.g. Bath time (wash, tummy, feet, hands, arms, up, down etc.)
Meal time (eat, drink, pop, biscuit, spoon, fork, more, gone etc.)



- ❖ If the child points to an object ask him or her what they want, rather than automatically giving it to them. This will give them the idea that, when ready, they need to communicate their needs more effectively.
After giving the child an opportunity to speak, model the target word before they become frustrated.
e.g. 'You wanted the car, here's the car.'

- ❖ Talk about activities as they happen at home and when out and about.
e.g. 'I'm washing', 'Daddy's digging'
'Look at the girls . . . playing/running/clapping'
'You're eating', 'You're painting'
Later on see if the child can tell you what they or someone else are doing.

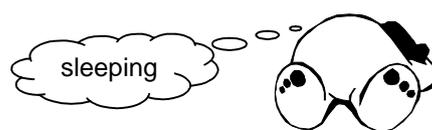
- ❖ Sing nursery rhymes together and encourage the child to do the actions that fit the words.



- ❖ Show the child a choice of two things, saying their names. Try to make one of the choices something you know the child wants.
e.g. 'Shall we play with the toys or go out for a walk?'
'Do you want milk or juice?'
Encourage him or her to try to tell you what they want. Accept any attempt the child makes at a word. Reinforce the word when you give them the item.
e.g. 'You wanted the juice, here is the juice.'

- ❖ Place some familiar objects in a box/bag and name them as you take them out, one at a time. Try to make it interesting '*here's a ball/car/apple!*'
You can then hide the objects around the room and get the child to find and name them. Return the objects to the box saying '*bye-bye car.*'
Gradually encourage the child to start naming each object as it comes out of the box. Praise every attempt made, reinforcing the key word.
e.g. 'Yes, it's a car.'

- ❖ Whilst playing with teddies/dollies ask the child to carry out a simple action.
e.g. '*Make teddy jump/dance/sleep/eat/kick*'
Encourage the child to tell you what teddy is doing.





Some important first words are 'more, gone, up and down'. These are important because a child can communicate many messages using them. They are also 'linking words' which can be joined to other first words children use when they are ready to move on and use two words together.



- ❖ 'More'
Using bricks, stacking beakers or a simple puzzle, help the child build a tower or complete the puzzle. Start by passing him or her one brick/piece. Say 'more' when offering subsequent bricks/pieces. Later wait for them to say 'more' before giving them the next piece. Any activity can be used in this way such as being tickled, pushed on a swing, blowing bubbles, meal times.

- ❖ 'Gone'
Let the child play with a small toy for a while and then suddenly cover it with a cloth and say 'gone!' Repeat this a few times using different toys and make a game of it. After a while cover the toy and wait for the child to say 'gone!' Encourage the child if necessary with '*What's happened? . . . It's . . .*' You can use lots of everyday activities to teach this word such as when the dinner is finished, when posting shapes, watching a car go round the corner. Say 'gone' yourself and encourage the child to copy you.



- ❖ 'Up/Down'
Every time you go to pick up the child or they reach their arms up to you, say 'up'. After a while pause slightly before picking them up so that he or she has a chance to copy you. Similarly you can say 'down' when they climb off your lap. Also use these key words in other situations.
e.g. Building a tower up and knocking it down, arms up when getting dressed.



Mainstream Schools>POC 18b>1 Word Level>Beginning to Talk – First Words
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