

## Encourage speaking and listening at home

Ditch the dummy – if your child still has a dummy in the day give it to the dummy fairy – your child will not develop the correct muscles or conversational skills with a dummy in their mouth!

Turn off the TV – I little bit of TV with you watching and talking about the programme is great, constantly having background noise of TV is not good for listening skills, and using the TV as a child minder does not encourage conversation!

Switch off the phone – you can survive for a few minutes without your phone! If you are playing and talking with your child give them quality time without interruptions.

Interact with your child and other people – make sure you give some eye contact, let them see you use gestures and facial expressions – all important parts of a conversation.

Take turns – conversations are about taking turns, not all one sided, so speak and then listen.

Increase your child's vocabulary –

- teach mainly nouns (naming words) at first but don't forget to teach verbs (doing words) like jumping, running, washing etc.
- Include adjectives and adverbs (describing words) like enormous, fast, soft. If you use these words in a sentence while you're talking children will soon learn them.
- Play silly word games where you use lots of different words that mean the same thing eg "Look at that dog, it's enormous, it's massive, it's huge, it's gigantic..."
- Repeat and add one –sometimes say back your child's sentence and add one word eg child says "I like dogs" you say "I like fluffy dogs", or "I go shops" you say "Yes we 're going to the shops"

Improve your child's speech sounds

Don't tell your child off for using the incorrect sounds, but let them hear it said correctly. Eg If your child says "I like gogs" you repeat it "You like dogs" or "I like dogs too" – keep it incontext, but let them hear that d sound as you speak.

Disfluency (stammering)

If your child stutters or stammers or just can't get the words out, don't worry. Just give your child time to speak and don't draw attention to it. Usually this phase will pass as they get more mature. If it doesn't get better, or if it's all the time, or if your child is aware of it, then it's time to get professional advice from a speech and language therapist

Effects on school life

If your child can speak clearly and effectively, has a good vocabulary and can understand well -they will do well at school. Research has shown that good language skills are key to success in all academic subjects. You have to be able to listen, to understand and to speak in all areas of school life.

So make time for listening games, conversations and quality time with your child as often as you can, where ever you are and whatever you are doing. And remember to listen to them too!

