



A GUIDE TO SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

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Speech and language difficulties, problems in understanding and using words, affect up to 10% of all children and may impact on children's educational, social and emotional development. Early identification of difficulties is essential so that children may be supported in developing skills and so the adults around them recognise that this support is needed. For some children the difficulties are transient and the right support at the right time will help them catch up with their peers. For other children the difficulties are more severe and long term, and they may need extra help through to secondary school and beyond.

(Source: ICAN, The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication, 2006)

Key characteristics

Each child is an individual and will have his or her own 'pattern' of strengths and difficulties. There are several characteristics commonly seen in this group of children including difficulties:

- in listening and attention to spoken language
- in understanding what has been said, for example, following instructions or knowing what words mean
- learning, remembering and using new vocabulary
- putting words together in grammatical sentences
- in using language to explain or describe
- in saying speech sounds which may lead to other people not always understanding what the child is saying

Support strategies

Listening and attention

- Make sure you have the child's attention by, for example, saying his or her name, before you give an instruction
- Be aware of background noise (the television at home or other children talking in the classroom). Background noise will affect the child's ability to concentrate on what you are saying.
- 'Chunk' verbal information into smaller bits to make it easier to remember

Understanding language

- Give children extra opportunities to learn and understand new concepts and ideas; always provide visual support (pictures, objects, symbols) for learning
- Support understanding through experiences (activities, games and outings); record these with a digital camera and use photos as an extra visual cue when talking about the topic
- Focus on understanding 'wh' questions (who, what, where, when, and why); children need to know for example, that 'who' questions are asking about a person, 'where' questions are asking about a place.

Developing vocabulary

- Use visual support for vocabulary learning (pictures, objects, symbols) and give children lots of opportunities for repetition
- Help children remember words through giving extra information e.g. what group does it belong to? What does it look like? What do you do with it? Where do you see it?

Developing sentences & using language to describe and explain

- Listening to stories and developing story-telling skills are valuable in helping children's language; this should start at the level appropriate to the child and build up gradually. For example, if the child is only using simple sentences begin with describing single activity pictures and build up to short picture sequences.
- Grammatical structures can be supported by modelling the target, for example, if the child says 'daddy drive car' you may say 'yes, daddy **is driving** the car'

Developing speech

(Always ask the speech and language therapist how best to support an individual child)

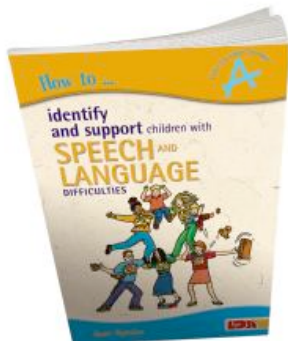
- If the child has difficulties with particular sounds you can model the target (but not ask him or her to say the word again), for example, if the child says 'that's a tat' you might say 'yes, it's a **cat**' with slight emphasis on the first sound

Recommended LDA resources

How to Identify and Support Children with Speech and Language Difficulties
AAMT00598
£9.99

Action Lotto
ABMT00839
£29.95

Expressive Language Chatter Box
ABMT00773
£117.99 (VAT will be added to this price)



Language Cards Interactive!
See Catalogue for more info

Story Maker's Chest
ABMT10203
£94.95 (VAT will be added to this price)



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