



## PARENT HANDOUT



# HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SPEECH & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

### SPEECH SOUNDS (ARTICULATION):

By the time your child starts school, *most* people should be able to understand *most* of what your child says. Some articulation errors are still OK for prep students, such as substituting /w/ for /r/ (e.g. "wed" for 'red'), substituting /f/ for /th/ (e.g. "fumb" for 'thumb') or having a lisp (e.g. "thun" for 'sun').

Some errors are no longer age appropriate. These errors include:

- Cluster reductions (e.g. "wim" for 'swim')
- Substituting /t/ for /k/ or /d/ for /g/ (e.g. "tat" for 'cat' or "dod" for 'dog')
- Confusion with the sounds: w, l, r, y
- Vowel distortions (e.g. "rad" for 'red')
- Slushy /s/ sound

If your child has difficulty with any of these sounds, or has difficulty being understood, you can help by:

- Repeating back the words they say using the correct sounds. For example, if your child says "There's a dod" (for dog), you could say "Oh you're right, there's dog over there"
- You could encourage your child to look at you when you say the 'tricky' word. For example, if the child says "Where my dock (for sock)?" you could say "Oh you're looking for your ssssock! Watch how I say that word, it starts with an /ssssss/ sound... SSSSSOCK")
- You could encourage the child to repeat the work back correctly, but don't persist if they are unable to say it properly. Just say something like "Good try".

### RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE:

Receptive language is learning to listen and to understand language. The most important ingredient for a child's learning is to understand the teacher. If a child cannot understand the sentence their teacher has said, then this will impact on their learning or how the child performs the task.

By the age of 5 children should be able to:

- Follow instructions in a group
- Answer simple 'who', 'what' and 'where' questions
- Understand linguistic concepts: next to, before, after, first
- Understand basic concepts: time, attribution, size, equality, quantity
- Understand different word and sentence types: verbs, negatives, passives, commands



If your child has difficulty with any of these skills, it is important to:

- Simplify your language. Don't use "baby talk", instead use fewer words and emphasise the key words. For example, instead of saying "We're now going to go to the shops so please put your shoes on", say "Put your shoes on, we're going to the shops" or even "Shoes on".

- Use gestures when talking to help enhance meaning, or demonstrate (model) what it is you want your child to do.
- Give your child time to process what you have said. For example, if you have asked a question, don't rephrase or ask again until you have given plenty of time for them to think about the question and come up with their answer.
- If your child has difficulty answering questions, giving them choice questions will help. For example, "Do you want milk or juice?" Showing them the choices, or using gestures or other visual aids, will also help.
- If your child is able to answer simple questions, give them open ended questions (e.g. "What did you do at Grandma's house"?) or leading statements ("My favourite game is Monopoly...") to further stimulate and encourage their language development.

### EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE:

Expressive language is learning to speak and to use language. For children to interact with others around them, and to get their needs and wants across, they need to be able to be understood by others. Sometimes, a child is difficult to understand because of their poor sentence structures, incorrect use of grammar, lack of information given or poor choice of words. These areas are all related to expressive language.

By the age of 5 children should be able to use the following word and sentences structures:

- Prepositions (on, in, under, behind, next to/beside, in front of)
- Plural 's' and 'es' (books, glasses)
- Conjunction (and, because)
- Possessive 's' (dad's book)
- Pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we, they) (mine, yours, hers, his, theirs, ours, its)
- Present tense (I am running, They are singing)
- Noun-verb agreement (He is happy, They were playing)
- 3rd person tense (The dog barks)
- Future tense (The girl will swim, The boy is going to play)
- Regular past tense 'ed' (The girl laughed)
- Negation (is not, was not)



If your child has difficulty with any of these skills, try the following:

- When your child makes a grammatical error, model the correct way for them. For example, if your child said "The dog runned after the car", you could say "Yes you're right, the dog **ran** after the car" (emphasizing the correct word)
- Expand on what your child says adding more detail to their sentence. For example, if your child says "There's a cat", you could say "Yes, it's a **fluffy, white** cat"
- Open ended questions (such as "What do you want to do today?") encourage your child to use more language. If your child struggles to answer open ended questions, ask questions which give your child a choice of alternatives (such as "Do you want to go to the beach or the zoo?")

## LITERACY:

Literacy skills include reading, writing and spelling. At the age of 5, children are expected to have a number of 'pre-literacy' skills (otherwise known as phonological or sound awareness skills). Phonological awareness is the ability to reflect on and be aware of sounds in words. As children learn to read, they need to be able to identify the sounds in words. Hearing sounds in words involves the following skills:

- Sound and letter connection (e.g. the letter 'A' makes an /a/ sound)
- Counting syllables (or beats) in a word (e.g. ca-ter-pil-lar)
- Recognising that words rhyme (e.g. *cat* rhymes with *mat*, but *cow* doesn't rhyme)
- Recognising that *cat* and *king* start with the same sound (/k/)



If your child has difficulty with any of these tasks, it is important to:

- Read books to your child every day. It's okay to read the same books over and over, as long as your child enjoys them. Talk about what is happening in the story and what might happen next. Encourage your child to retell the story once you have finished it.
- Point out words in the text and talk about the sounds in the words. For example, if there is a word that starts with the same sound as your child's name.
- Books that rhyme are great. Encourage your child to think of more words that rhyme.
- Show your child words and signs when you are out and about. For example, point out 'stop' signs and other street signs, shop names, or street names.

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If you have concerns regarding your child's speech, language or literacy development, speak to your child's class teacher, who can liaise with the school's speech pathologist.

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