

Including me!



# Supporting early language development at home

Please don't think you have to try all these ideas every day! They are purely suggestions and may or may not work. If they don't work, try another.

- ◆ **Be aware of how many questions** you ask. When children have limited speech it is very easy to ask more questions but too many questions will put pressure on your child. Instead, try to comment on what the child is doing, using short 2 -3 word phrases.
- ◆ **Use forced alternatives.** This can be a useful strategy to introduce vocabulary. Often, children only need to answer yes or no, a forced alternative requires the child to attempt to say one of two words. Eg. You know the child wants juice not milk so you say "would you like juice or milk" and the child attempts to say juice. Accept any attempt at the word. Give specific praise such as "I really like it when you use your voice/I like to hear you talk". This can be a very powerful way of introducing new vocabulary and because the child has already heard the word, it is easier for them. Don't use this strategy constantly and always stop if your child becomes frustrated.
- ◆ Try to play alongside your child for a few minutes each day, "**modelling**" appropriate sounds and words. Follow the child's lead - let him/her choose what to do and how to play. Do not ask your child to copy your words but if s/he does so spontaneously, give specific praise. Any sounds are great - no matter how silly you might feel!
- ◆ **Rhymes and songs** can be an effective way to promote speech. Perhaps play a song tape in the car (make sure the songs aren't sung too quickly) or sing songs at home. When you think your child knows the song, leave out some of the words, giving him/her time to attempt them. Eg. "Humpty Dumpty sat on the ...." If s/he doesn't join in, don't worry, it will take time.

- Five fat sausages is a good song to encourage loud sounds - if you can stand it! (your child will probably really enjoy using plastic/paper sausages and a frying pan)

*Five fat sausages sizzling in a pan, all of a sudden, one went BANG!  
Repeat for 4, 3, 2, 1,*

- Hickory Dickory Dock is another song that is useful for soundmaking:

*Hickory Dickory Dock, the mouse ran up the clock, the clock struck five,  
the mouse said "Hi!", Hickory Dickory Dock*

*Repeat for:*

*Four - roar! (or anything similar!)*

*Three - whee!*

*Two - boo!*

*One-run!*

The more actions and silliness the better!

- 'Old MacDonald had a farm' is a great song to encourage animals sounds. Again accept any attempt your child makes at the sound.

**Provide lots of opportunities for your child to need to use spoken language:**

- If your child gets stuck or wants something - don't jump in and help straightaway (even if you know what they want!)
- Get your child to 'tell you what to do' - pretend you've forgotten e.g. where your coat is kept or how to clean your teeth. Ask your child to tell you what to do.

**Sharing books** - don't always just read the story but point and name the pictures. Use the strategy of occasionally not ending a sentence, giving time for your child to name the pictures. Eg. "Oh, look, it's a ....."