

# First words and beyond...

Ways to help  
your child with  
talking

Developed by Peterborough  
Speech and Language Therapy  
Children's Centres Team.





Children are great at letting you know what they want before they can use words. They will play at making sounds and noises, use gestures, point to things they want, use facial expressions and make their voices go up and down. By the end of their first year they are often beginning to say their first words. Children are more likely to start using the words they hear all the time, e.g. 'mummy', 'milk', 'gone', 'more', 'bye bye'.

There are lots of ways that you can help your child begin to use language:

- Enjoy playing together – make lots of noises e.g. when playing with cars say 'brum brum', 'beep beep', 'neenar neenar'. When playing tea parties make noises of the kettle boiling, pouring the water, eating cake.
- Use facial expressions, gestures and an interesting voice while playing with your child.





- Remember to turn off the TV/radio/computer. This will help your child to listen to you.
- Play 'pee-po', have lots of fun, giggles and tickles together.
- Play 'ready, steady, go' with cars, by running or when rolling a ball.
- Play 'teddy gone' – teddy comes out to play and then suddenly hides, each time he hides say 'teddy gone'.
- Saying words and simple phrases over and over again helps your child to learn to talk, for example, 'here's juice', 'drink juice', 'juice gone', 'more juice'.
- Let your child join in with everyday activities and describe what you're doing using simple sentences, e.g. 'wash the cups' 'light on/light off'.



- Give your child lots of opportunities to talk. You can do this by giving them choices e.g. 'do you want an apple or a banana?', 'shall we play with the cars or look at a book?'. It is also important to leave silences so your child can practise talking.
- Praise any attempts at talking, even if the words are unclear.



**...and remember to keep learning to talk fun!**



## When should I ask for help?

If you are concerned that your child is having difficulties with learning to talk or communicate, speak to your Health Visitor, Doctor, local Children's Centre or your child's preschool (if they go to one).

- Share books together and talk about the pictures.
- Avoid trying to make your child say words (e.g. 'say apple', 'what's this?'), simply name things for them, for example 'ooo, that's an apple'. Name body parts and clothes as you get your child dressed, name food at meal times. If possible make eye contact before naming the item – this will be easier if you are face-to-face.
- Sing songs and do actions together, e.g. 'Round and Round the Garden', 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' and 'Twinkle, Twinkle'.

