Tips for parents

How to communicate with your child:

• Interact with your child during play and ensure face-to-face contact when speaking
• Encourage taking turns in conversation
• Use lots of gestures and facial expressions to assist your child’s understanding
• Follow your child’s lead - observe what your child is focusing on, wait, listen and respond
• Acknowledge all attempts at communicating and reward your child’s efforts
• Describe what you see, hear, feel, smell, taste and think to your child
• Use appropriate questions such as “What happens next?”, “What if?” “What now?”
• Allow your child to make choices (eg “Do you want to read a book or play outside?”)
• Use books as a chance to communicate - look at pictures together, take turns and name items or actions.

Avoid:

• Dominating the conversation
• Finishing your child’s sentences
• Assuming what your child wants to say
• Using questions that bombard or answer themselves (eg repeated use of “What’s that?” or “You want a blanket, don’t you?”)
• Interrupting if your child talks to him or herself. This is important practice in language development.

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Suggested resources

Books

Begin with “feel”, “smell” and “do” books and get your child to actively participate.

- **Word Book** by Dick Bruna
- **Alphabet Book** by Robert Crowther
- **Goodnight, Good Morning** by Helen Oxenbury
- **One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish** by Dr Seuss
- **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** by Eric Carle
- **Where’s Spot** by Eric Hill
- **Spot’s First Walk** by Eric Hill
- **The Little Red Hen** by Paul Galdone

Games

- **People Games**
  - Peek-a-boo
  - Pat-a-cake

- **Toys & Objects**
  - The child first - looks and explores
  - Toys that can be shaken, squeezed or stretched
  - Later - discovers “cause & effect”
  - Construction toys
  - Puzzle boards
  - Wind-up toys
  - Farm Houses
  - Building blocks
  - Toys which link together

Websites

Please talk to your Speech Pathology student about great websites and resources to access for further information.

Phone: 07 3365 2232
Email: healthclinics@uq.edu.au
Web: www.uq.edu.au/healthclinics

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Speech Pathology 2
Parent Information Series

Early Language Development
Language development

Communication develops gradually and varies with each child

- Children express themselves with gestures and by talking or making noises
- Usually expressive language develops after your child has learnt to understand what you say.

Encourage language development

- Language allows children to express their experiences, thoughts and feelings
- In the process of encouraging language development, you will be interacting with your child, building your relationship and discovering more about each other.

Hearing

- Hearing problems can affect your child’s ability to develop language
- Repeated middle ear infections can cause fluctuating hearing loss which may affect language development
- It is important to check hearing and ear health regularly.

Developmental milestones

Children often develop their talking and listening skills at different rates. However, there is a general pattern to a child’s language development.

By 0 - 12 months your child should:

Hearing and understanding

- Understand simple commands such as “yes” and “no”
- Understand simple phrases such as “come here” or “don’t touch”
- Recognise his/her name
- Imitates or uses gestures, such as waving bye-bye
- Turn and look in the direction of sounds.

Talking

- Begin babbling (eg “baba” or “googoo”)
- Imitate different speech sounds
- Have one or two words, such as “mumma” or “bye-bye” although they may not be clear
- Try to make familiar sounds, such as animal noises or cars.

By 1 - 2 years your child should:

Hearing and understanding

- Point to a few simple body parts when asked
- Follow simple commands, such as “get the book”
- Understand the names of familiar objects & people and simple questions, such as “where’s your shoe?”
- Point to pictures in books when named.

Talking

- Begin to use sentences of three-four words
- Participate in short conversations
- Ask “why” questions
- Enjoy telling stories and asking questions
- Be generally understood by familiar adults.

Developmental milestones continued

Talking

- Name simple body parts
- Use more than 50 words by two years, including simple descriptive words, such as “big” and “hot”
- Talk to themselves during play
- Use some pronouns instead of names, such as “he” or it
- Try simple, one-two word sentences, such as “more milk”
- Begin to ask simple “wh” questions such as “what’s that?” (although it may sound like “wat dat?”).