

# Strategies to Support the Building Blocks of Communication

## Attention and Listening

- Get child's attention before you speak- call name, tap shoulder
- Get down to their level
- Be aware of distractions i.e. visual on walls, noise levels
- Use visual prompts, facial expression, tone of voice to engage child's interest
- Practical ideas: - Letters & sounds phase 1- listening activities i.e. discriminating instrument sounds, listening walks etc.
- Story time- if child has difficulty listening give them a specific thing to listen for i.e. want you to tell me the dog's name at the end of the story.
- OR after story i.e. Dear Zoo, get children to talk in pairs about their favourite zoo animal and then share it with group if they can. That way poor listeners don't feel left out of missing some of the story.

## Play and Interaction

- Be face to face, get down to their level.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes.
- Look at books together.
- Copy actions e.g. facial expressions and sounds the child makes.
- Model and extend language during play
- Let children explore different activities and materials, including sensory
- Follow child's lead and interests- children only open to language when they are excited/interested in something
- Be aware of where children's talking comes alive in your setting 'talking hotspots' and build on these
- CFS- places to explore, to investigate, cosy spaces.
- Story chair
- Small group focus- turn taking games
- Key worker- strong relationship to support the child. Once this is established bring 1 other child into the relationship then another etc.
- Talk about modelling play and language for parents- how are you supporting parents to carry this on at home?

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## Understanding of Language

- Give choices
- When the child is playing, if s/he looks at you, give him/her the word they need!
- Slow down the pace of activities
- Be consistent in the words you use
- Simplify language- break it down into shorter chunks
- Give child time to respond
- Keep activities practical where possible- match spoken with visual, practical.
- Visual cues/ gesture
- Visual timetables
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Pre-teaching of topic vocabulary.
- For slightly older child ask them to repeat back what you have asked them to do. This will check their understanding of what has been asked of them
- Use musical instruments to signal changes in the routine (e.g. tidy up time)

## Use of Language

- Give choices
- Give the child TIME to talk. Sometimes silence is better than talking!
- Read books and sing songs
- Model language and comment on what your child is doing
- If the child says a word, expand on it by repeating and adding another word, e.g if the child says 'brick' you could say 'red brick'
- Chatterbox- empty box- child takes box home and chooses something with an adult to put in the box, bring back to the setting and talk about.
- Chatterbags- may be a themed bag or a bag that supports imagination i.e. wand, glitter, story etc.
- Storysacks
- Take home toys – toys for children to take home. Parents and child contribute to a diary with pictures etc. and then child can feedback to setting
- New, exciting activities that inspire language
- Make good time to just talk/gossip/reflect, particularly with older children
- Imaginative play/role play
- Use puppets/props
- Adapt language to the level of each child