

Developing language  
in young children:

**TALK  
& PLAY**

**EVERY  
DAY**

**2**  
years+



**A helpful guide to early language development**



St Helena  
Government

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**Talk & Play Every Day**  
is a parent's guide to  
help encourage your young  
child's early language and  
communication skills.  
We hope you find this  
leaflet helpful...

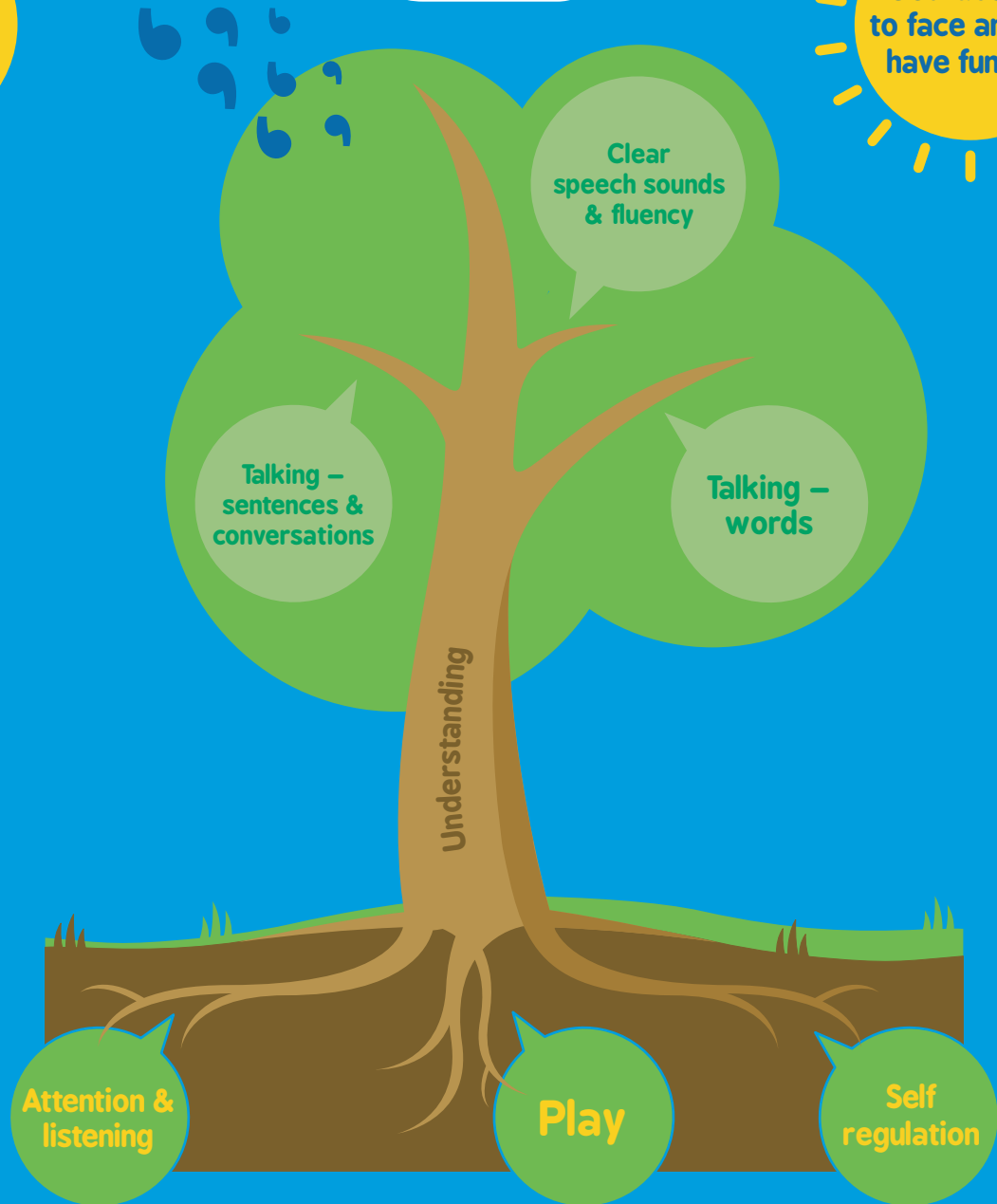


Further advice or information is available from your local  
speech and language therapist, child health nurse or creche.

**How communication grows...**

**Time to talk  
and play together**

**Get face  
to face and  
have fun!**



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## At this stage of early communication development, most young children...

- **Understand a wide range of simple instructions** (eg. 'show me your eyes', 'where is your coat?') and are beginning to understand longer instructions (e.g. 'where's Mummy's shoe?', 'give teddy a drink').
- **Use up to 200 single words** including a range of people's names (e.g. 'Daddy', 'Nanny'), familiar objects (e.g. 'bed', 'apple', 'chair'), action words (e.g. 'wash', 'jump', 'sleep'), and social words (e.g. 'hello', 'look', 'no').
- **Put words together to make short sentences** (e.g. 'teddy sleep', 'want more milk'). They will be asking questions, talking about how they feel or things they have been doing, making up stories and telling others what to do!
- **Use a wider range of speech sounds.** However, the sounds they use will still not be as clear as an adult (e.g. 'wed' instead of 'red') and they may shorten or simplify words to make them easier to say (e.g. 'tar' instead of 'star', 'nana' instead of 'banana').
- **Are able to concentrate on activities for a longer amount of time**, and listen to simple stories. Attention and listening skills in young children are a very important part of learning language.



# 5 ways you can help your young child learn to talk...

## LOOK

**Get down to your child's level!** This will help your young child focus their attention, look at you and copy the movements that your lips make as you say sounds and words. It will also **help you see what they are interested in** so you can talk about what they are doing.

## LISTEN

Leave plenty of time for your child to respond, or to join in with your words or actions. **Wait, watch and listen** carefully to what they are telling or showing you, then follow his/her lead and join in. Young children can become frustrated when adults don't understand them! Try to **be patient** and wait for them to finish what they are saying or trying to show you. It can be helpful to **encourage** your child to use gestures (e.g. to represent objects or actions) to help avoid frustration and tantrums!

## TALK

**Talk, talk and talk!** Use every opportunity to talk with your young child about everyday activities, such as making lunch or hanging up the washing. This will help them connect the language and words to the world around them. At this age, **children often love to help** and sharing daily activities provides excellent opportunities to **name objects and actions**, and extend your child's vocabulary.

## PLAY

Play is a child's work! Spend time together – **playing games** (e.g. washing and dressing teddy; playing with puppets; picture matching and puzzles); **singing nursery rhymes** (e.g. 'Five green bottles', 'Row-row-row your boat', 'If you're happy and you know it'); and **sharing books, stories from your childhood or pictures together**. Never be afraid to repeat words, games and stories over and over and over again – this will help children understand and remember the words they hear!

## SHARE

**Try and share some special time together each day**, when you and your child can talk, play, laugh, cuddle up or simply enjoy being together! Switch off the phone/screens and get face-to-face.

As well as using new words or repeating back what your child says, you can also begin to **expand** on what they are saying. For example, if your child says 'milk', you could say 'more milk' or 'milk gone'. This **helps children understand** how words can be put together to make short sentences.



**Remember...** always use the language **you** feel most comfortable with when talking together.

Further advice or information is available from your local speech and language therapist, child health nurse or creche.

## Did you know?

You are your child's favourite toy and they enjoy listening to your voice more than anyone else's!

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**Info & contacts...**

**“Let children be children.  
A skilled five year  
old grows from a  
busy four year old, a  
curious three year old,  
a cuddled two year  
old, an adventurous  
one year old and a  
communicative baby.”**

**Jenny Lindon**

Babies – learning starts from the  
first day. Early Education.

‘Talk and Play Every Day’ are a series  
of leaflets written and developed  
by Guy’s & St Thomas’ Children &  
Young People’s Community Speech  
& Language Therapy Service