



## Communication Week 2021 Activity Ideas for Practitioners Early Years Service, Children's Services

### Top Tips for Talking

Be careful with questions! If you already know the answer, make a comment instead. E.g. 'I wonder what will happen if...', 'you're building with the bricks...!', 'Oh look, I can see...'

Expand on what has already been said 'Yes! He's a gigantic spider'

Say things correctly for him/her. If a child makes a mistake when s/he talks, don't criticise just respond with the correct version. E.g. 'nana', 'yes, a banana' or 'I done it', 'Yes, you did it'



### Thinking Thursday

#### Word of the Day "Ponder"

How many other words can your children think of that are to do with 'thinking'? Make a list and add to it.

### Learning and Development

If children need their imaginations stimulated before they will engage in sustained shared thinking, then an item of provocation is good for starting these conversations e.g. a giant snail shell or a peacock feather.

### Songs

If you're happy and you know it [CBeebies](#)

Start the day with a Hello Emotion Song; "Hello, Hello, Hello and how are you? I'm fine, I'm fine, and I hope that you are too." Ask the children to volunteer other ways they could feel and/or have pictures of feeling faces to choose from. Sing the song with that emotion in your expressions, voice, and actions

### Books – Plan to read books that encourage thinking and support children to express themselves

[The Huge Bag of Worries](#) by Virginia Ironside

[Today I feel... An Alphabet of Feelings](#) by Madelena Moniz

[What do you do with a Problem](#) by Kobi Yamada

[Jubari Jumps](#) by Gaia Cornwall

#### To challenge stereotypes

[Rosie Revere, Engineer](#) by Andrea Beatty

### In My Imagination

Where is your imagination? What does it look like? Where will your imagination take you?!

[Whatever Next Jill Murphy](#) A great book to spark your imagination.

Provide a prop box and ask the children to think about an adventure they could go on in their imaginations. Play alongside the children modelling your thinking and verbalise your own imaginative thoughts.

In a small group play the game 'I went to the Moon and took ...' as the children take turns, they need to remember the items that were taken before and then add theirs "A star catcher, moon dust, a teddy and?"

For older children: [Where Do You Get Your Ideas From? | Children's Poetry Archive](#)

### Thinking Starters

#### Mystery box

Children add items from home or the setting to a box.

In small groups children take turns to describe an object from the box while the others imagine what it is.

The children can use their imaginations to make up stories about an item (who would the wooden spoon be, if he came to life?)

#### Guess What I Have

With a small toy in one hand, place both hands behind your back. Ask your child to guess what is in your hand. As they make attempts to guess, give them clues such as: "it's not blue, it's red," or "it doesn't have wheels, it has legs." This allows them to make guesses based on what they already know.

#### Play the 'Is It True?' Game

Ask your child a question that starts with 'Is it true that...'. When they answer, ask them how they know that it is true or not

#### Teddy's Feelings

Present Teddy with a bandaged arm, ask how the children think she's feeling? Could also use Teddy in other situations, e.g. she hasn't been able to see Granny due to Lockdown, how do you think that makes her feel, what could she do?

## Communication and Language

### Find out More

#### I CAN – The Communication Charity

[I Can Resources](#) These resources are suitable for practitioners and to signpost parents to. They will enable settings to pick up on when there are gaps in communication and link to support.

- Talk Together booklet - also in a range of languages to download
- Developmental checks – posters for different age groups
- Info about Speech Communication Language Needs (SCLN) – specific aspects e.g. lisps, glue ear
- Strategies and practical tips – ideas range from reluctant talkers, stammering, siblings to books to toys

#### Literacy Trust

[Literacy Trust Resources](#)

Leaflets across a range of topics. For example, television, bottles and dummies, rhymes, books. Available in an array of languages.

#### Buckinghamshire Speech and Language Therapy Communication Carousel

<https://slt.buckshealth.link/communication-carousel/>

Quality reference point with strategies to support communication development.

## Every Conversation Counts

### Pay Attention

It can be very difficult in a busy setting to pay full attention when you are talking with children. Find time to be in the moment; this will mean that you are more likely to notice when children use new words, explain their thinking or explore ideas with you. Balance time with individual and group conversations.

This is also an ideal situation for sustained shared thinking to take place, where concepts can be extended, problems solved, or previous ideas revisited.

### Time to think

Aim to have periods of quiet time within your busy day for children to think about their experiences, absorb knowledge and listen carefully to the language around them. Let them be.

### Modelling Language

Use different ways to interact with children; aim not to ask too many questions, this may encourage more sustained interactions.

For example, using a running commentary about what is happening when playing alongside children demonstrates the use of language and sentence structure. Questioning yourself aloud “I wonder .....

### Show Genuine Interest

Those interactions that having the greatest impact, are the ones that happen on the spur of the moment. This is especially true if you show genuine interest in what the child is saying to you.

### Partnership with Parents

The home learning environment is a critical element of children’s language and communication experiences. How often do you discuss language development with parents and share ideas?

### Fun

Quality interactions are more likely to occur if there is an atmosphere within the setting for enjoying talking with children and having fun with language.

### Shared Experiences

Sometimes the best quality interactions are those that don’t involve language at all. Knowing that someone else is thinking about the same thing is communicated by simply having joint, shared interaction, using eye contact and gestures. Other times it helps to model thinking aloud “Mmm, it did not work so I wonder what I could try” .....a bigger piece?

Find out more [What Is Sustained Shared Thinking? - With Kathy Brodie | Family](#)

## Every Conversation Counts

Some of the best interactions a child will have will be with their peers. Especially if the child is shy or quiet, they will need to spend time watching before joining in with conversation. Encourage children to work together on projects and activities and support them to talk to each other rather than just to you.

## Chatting Matters

**Vocabulary** and **increasing** the number of new words children hear every day is very important for future learning. Do you identify new words and encourage practitioners to widen children’s vocabulary?