

Top tips for developing talk

Children don't learn to talk by accident - they need adults to nurture and support their language and communication. The more adults know and understand about language and how it develops, the easier it is for them to help children improve their talking, understanding and listening skills.

A lot of language development happens between ages 0-5, but the following top tips apply to children and young people of all ages.



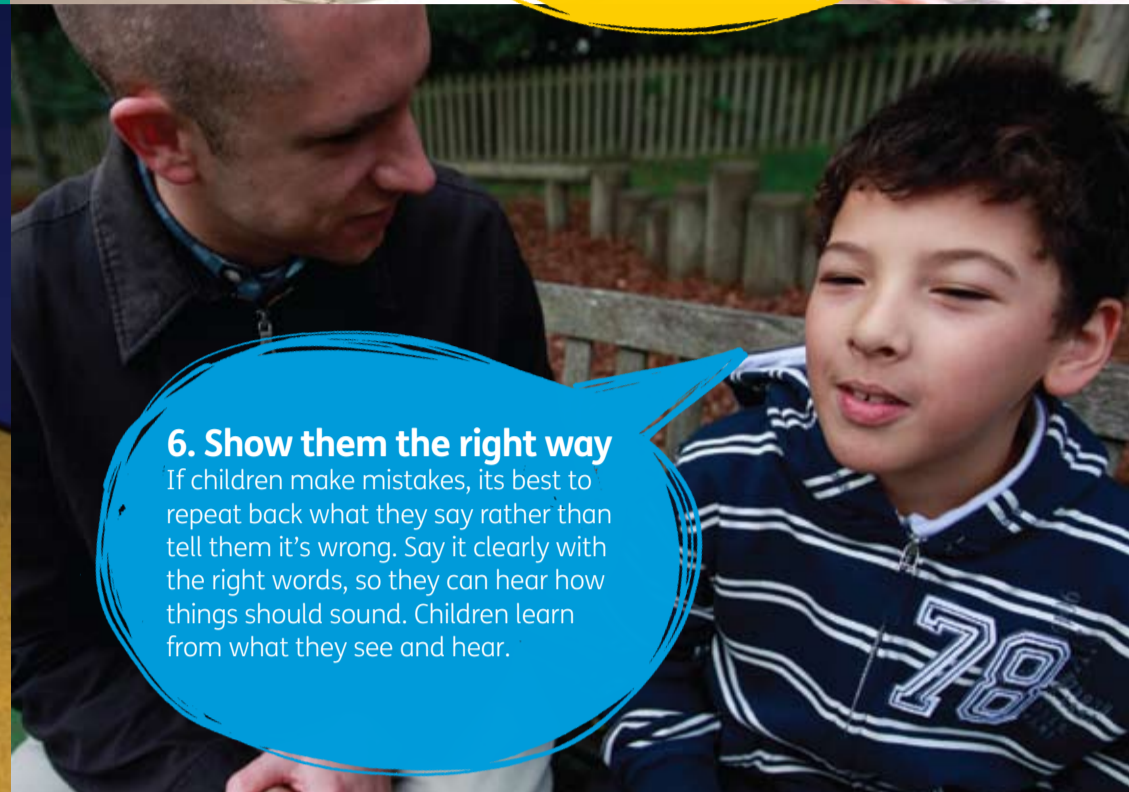
5. Be careful with questions

When adults use comments and prompts rather than questions, children join in and talk a lot more.



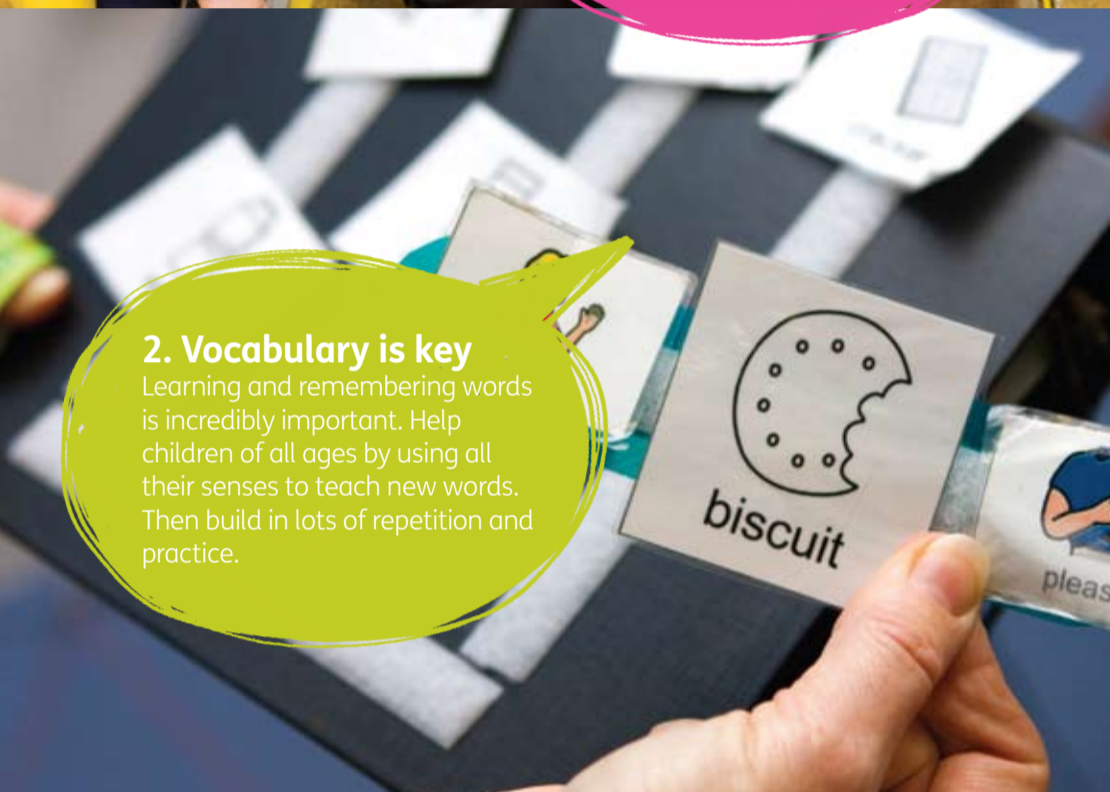
1. Get their attention

When children are absorbed in another activity, it can be hard to listen. Say their name first to get their attention and make sure they are listening.



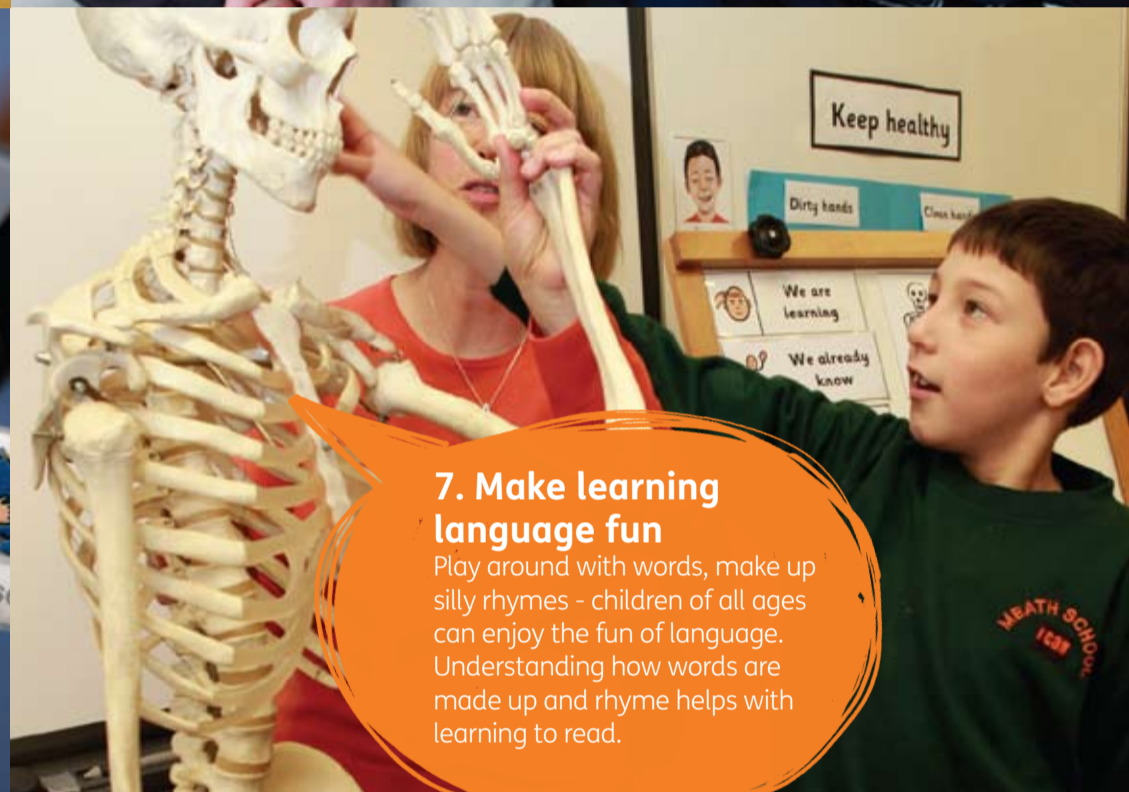
6. Show them the right way

If children make mistakes, it's best to repeat back what they say rather than tell them it's wrong. Say it clearly with the right words, so they can hear how things should sound. Children learn from what they see and hear.



2. Vocabulary is key

Learning and remembering words is incredibly important. Help children of all ages by using all their senses to teach new words. Then build in lots of repetition and practice.



7. Make learning language fun

Play around with words, make up silly rhymes - children of all ages can enjoy the fun of language. Understanding how words are made up and rhyme helps with learning to read.



3. Build on what they say

Build on what children know and say already, to support them develop language to go to the next level; for example, taking turns with babies, adding words for toddlers, adding phrases for older children and showing teens how to debate.



8. Give children time

Children need time to process what others have said, work out what they are going to say and how they are going to say it. Use facial expression to show you are listening and happy to wait.



4. Talk about what children are interested in

Children and young people are much more motivated to talk when it is about something they are interested in. Ask an open question where the answer is not only yes or no about a favourite hobby, for example.



9. Check out understanding

Encourage children to ask when they are unsure; check out understanding by asking children if they have understood - can they tell you what they need to do?

For further information and advice on how to develop children's communication skills please go to www.hello.org.uk

Hello is the 2011 national year of communication - a campaign to increase understanding of how important it is for all children and young people to develop good communication skills.

Hello aims to make 2011 the year when communication for children and young people becomes a priority in homes and schools across the country.

Visit www.hello.org.uk to find out more about the campaign, sign up for regular updates and order further copies of this leaflet.

Hello is managed by The Communication Trust in partnership with the Government's Communication Champion.



10. Have conversations

Communication is a skill like any other - the more it is practised, the better it gets! Children and young people benefit from practising having conversations with adults as well as people their own age.