

Basic communication strategies

These ideas will help everyone who's involved in a child's life to play a part in developing communication skills. They can be used in all activities, including play, and during daily routines such as dressing and mealtimes.

- Listen to the child's noises and words, and repeat them back.
- Give the child time to process what you've said and respond.
- Let the child lead play, and give them choices wherever possible.
- Mirror what the child is doing – this encourages you to follow their lead rather than be too directive.
- Make comments instead of asking the child too many questions.
- Keep your language simple and repetitive to give the child lots of experience of important words and phrases.
- Remember that communication is more than just the words. Use body language, facial expression, gestures and signs, and respond when the child uses these.
- Get down at the child's level and talk face to face.

Expressive Language

Expressive language refers to **how your child uses words to express himself/herself**. Young children with language difficulties may have: Poor eye contact. Difficulty interacting with other children.

Receptive language

Receptive language refers to **how your child understands language**. Expressive language refers to how your child uses words to express himself/herself. Young children with language difficulties may have: Poor eye contact. Difficulty interacting with other children.

Auditory processing

Auditory processing is more than just being able to hear. It's the ability to identify, remember and interpret the sounds you hear, including the order they happen in, where they come from and the small differences between similar sounds.

Auditory Processing is essential in the development of language skills, communication and comprehension.

What you might see

If a child is having difficulties with auditory processing, you'll notice that they:

- Have difficulties concentrating
- Are easily distracted
- Have trouble hearing what is being said when there's a lot of background noise
- Have difficulty distinguishing the teacher's voice against other background noise and might not respond when their name is called

How you can help

If you think a child is having difficulties, you can try the following techniques to help them:

- Use short, simple, one-concept instructions and, if necessary, repeat them using the same words. As they improve over time, you can make your instructions more complicated, e.g. "Get your shoes"(one step) increase to ,"Get your shoes and your coat" (two step)
- Try speaking instructions to a rhythm or music
- Give them some extra time to listen and process the information before expecting them to start an action or task
- Reduce any background noises where possible. Earplugs or headphones could help with this
- Make sure they're close to the source of any sound they should be listening to
- Limit the amount of time they need to stay focused on listening for
- Listen to soft music through head phones
- Give visual cues such as pictures, gestures, signing or visual demonstrations to support what you're saying
- Have a number of props during story time and ask them to pick up the right prop when you say its name
- Play 'Simon Says' to help them learn and follow instructions in a fun way
- Ask them to identify everyday noises, such as birds, bin collection, aeroplanes, traffic
- Ask them to clap when they hear a particular word or phrase
- Play musical chairs or statues
- Act out simple stories or nursery rhymes as they are spoken
- Play sound bingo
- Count how many times a specific noise is heard
- Play Twister

- Find a hidden ticking clock or watch.

Please bear in mind that these exercises can be very tiring for a child with auditory problems. Be patient and allow them to rest or stop if they need to.