



## 25 Ideas for Parents to Get Bowerham Talking!



Speech, language and communication skills are so important for all children, not just those with identified needs.

Here is a list of fun ideas to develop your child's language and communication skills as well as helpful tips and advice.

- The ideas don't cost anything and can be played anywhere when you have a few moments, such as when you are walking down the street, in the car, on the bus or in a doctor's waiting room. By developing your child's speaking and listening you will be supporting their reading, writing and learning.
- If your child speaks more than one language do these activities in your home language as a strong home language provides a foundation from which other languages can grow. **So get talking!**

- ✚ **Learning words.** As adults we need to know about 30,000 words. Most of these words are learnt in childhood. Children are programmed to learn words; they just need to hear them. Reading to your child is one way to expose your child to more words. If you come across an interesting word in a book try and use it again in a conversation with your child.
- ✚ **Listening skills.** For children to develop listening skills they need to practice them. In busy family lives there is often little quiet time. Try and reduce distracting noise. If no one is watching the TV, turn it off. There's enough volume in most homes without music on as well. Do a little every day to develop listening skills. One simple idea to get you started is: when you lose your mobile phone in the house, call it from the landline and ask the kids to find it.
- ✚ **Cooking.** Do some cooking with your child. It involves co-operation, planning, reading and listening. All things you need to succeed in school. As well as being great skills for life. <http://www.cookuk.co.uk/children-index.htm> 4.
- ✚ **Outdoor listening game.** This listening game that works best outdoors. Stand still and ask everyone to close their eyes. Listen to the sounds that you hear. One player names a sound that they can hear. Everyone points to the sound. Then on the count of 3 everyone opens their eyes. Are you all pointing in the same direction?
- ✚ **Explaining.** Listen to your child explaining how they do a favourite activity. Explaining how to do something is good practice for the type of speaking that your child needs to do in school. Ask your child to talk about how they made a Lego model, how they play a computer game or a board or card game. Try and listen without asking too many questions.

- ✚ **Stop the DVD.** Before you play a DVD tell all the viewers that you will be stopping it at some point. Choose a really exciting time to stop it. Ask everyone to guess what they think will happen next. Why do they think that?
- ✚ **Explore your local library.** As well as books they will have tapes and events to develop speaking and listening. Your nearest library is in Lancaster city centre.
- ✚ **'I spy'.** 'I spy' is a familiar game, but it is great for learning language and phonics as well as filling in time on journeys. On the bus or in the car one player looks around and thinks of one item. He /she then gives a clue 'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with (and says letter). All other players guess the item. Give 'I spy' a twist by giving a clue as well as the traditional letter. Like this, 'I spy with my little eye a food that starts with an 's'.'
- ✚ **Advice.** Talking is important. It is closely linked to reading, writing and learning. Did you know that research shows that spoken language abilities at 5 years of age predict their reading at 15? By playing simple speaking and listening games you may not think you are developing reading and writing, but you are. Get talking!
- ✚ **If I was King for a day.** Ask your child 'if you were King / Queen for a day what would you do?' Give them some time to think of an answer and then ask them why they chose that one. Encourage your child to ask other people what they would do if they were King / Queen for a day. A variation for older children is Prime minister instead of King / Queen.
- ✚ **Team topic.** On the bus or in the car think of a topic and see how many things you can come up with as a team in a set time. A minute might be enough. You can choose any topic but here are some ideas for inspiration: 'living things, things with wheels, things with circles or things made of metal.'
- ✚ **What's the same and what's different?** Choose a topic that your child is interested in and ask them select two items from that topic. Can they say what is same and different about two things? For instance: from Toy Story they could compare Buzz Light-Year and Woody or from Harry Potter it could be Sirius and Voldemort.
- ✚ **Listening advice.** Concentrating on one thing at a time helps your child to learn to listen better. Too much competing noise makes it harder for your child to listen to anything. If your child is on the computer do they also need the TV on? Encourage your child to plan what they watch on TV.
- ✚ **Change the story.** Take turns to tell well known stories with your child, but make small changes to the story and see where that takes you. Change the character, the setting or the ending. You might have 'Big red riding hood' or 'Goldilocks and the three kittens.' What would big red riding hood do to the wolf? What would Daddy kitten do when he saw Goldilocks in his bed? What would his voice sound like?

- ✚ **Make something with your child.** It may be craft or construction. Doing it together gives lots of time for talking. Try and listen more than talk and comment more than question. This website will give you further ideas, but you can do great things with bricks or by cutting up old cereal packets.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/familytime/learning/>
- ✚ **Build a story.** One person starts a made up story with one sentence, such 'as once upon a time an enormous giant was sleeping when.....' Other players then take turns to build on the story one sentence at a time. This is great to play in a group but is also fun when there are just two of you. Get creative and see what twists and turns you can add to your story.
- ✚ **Advice.** This one is for adults only! Listen to yourself when you talk to your child. Who does most of the talking? Who does the listening? Who asks the questions? Children's language develops more when adults follow the child's interests, use comments instead of questions and really show they are listening Set yourself a little target such as: giving your child more time to answer, comment more and question less, talk about things that interest your child. It's not as easy as it sounds so go easy on yourself.
- ✚ **Alphabet lists.** Choose a category, it might be something like clothes, food or TV programmes. Then choose a letter. See how many words you can think of from that category that start with the target letter. E.g.: clothes starting with 's': scarf, socks, sweatshirt.
- ✚ **Get out and about.** Exploring Lancaster and surrounding areas will give you and your child lots to talk about as well as lots of time to play the speaking and listening games on the journey. Take photos of your trip so that your child can talk to others when you get back. If no one is home when you get back, give someone else a call so your child can talk to them.
- ✚ **Reading and talking.** Reading books to your child is a great way to develop your child's language. Books expose children to more complex language. For children who are learning to read hearing stories can make them more enjoyable. For able readers talk about what you have read together to further develop their understanding.
- ✚ **Things you touch, see smell, taste and hear.** Talk about sensory experiences as they arise. When you smell something (good or bad) talk about words to describe it. Touch things. Can your child think of a word that describes how it feels. If they use words like 'good' or 'nice' challenge them to think of a more precise word, such as 'rough' or 'soothing'.
- ✚ **Asking Why?** Children like to ask 'Why?' so try asking some back. Start off with some obvious ones (usually related to 'rules') such as 'why do we need to look both ways before we cross the road?', before making it harder with more abstract ones like 'Why do our bodies like us to eat breakfast?' to ones that require real reasoning such as 'which is better to have holidays in summer or winter? Why?'

- ✚ **What would you do?** Think up small problems that your child might encounter such as getting lost, losing money, finding a mobile phone etc. Ask your child what would they do? Why? Ask other people what would they do and why? Which one is the best? Why? All of this is good practice with reasoning skills which are really important for lessons such as science as well as learning social skills.
- 43. **Word associations.** One player starts by saying a word. The next player says a word that is related to the first word. It can be related in any way. If another player cannot see how the words are related they can challenge and the connection needs to be explained. Keep going until a word is repeated or a connection cannot be explained. Here's an example: Egypt – Mummy – Dad – beard – Santa Claus – Christmas – trees – leaves
- ✚ **20 questions.** One person thinks of an object. Others try and guess what it is by asking questions. The original player can only answer yes, no or maybe. Give a clue if they are on the wrong track. Can they guess it in 20 questions?
- ✚ **I went shopping.** This game is sometimes called 'I went shopping' and is good for developing memory, so is good for adults too. One person starts by saying 'I went shopping and I bought a ...' (names a food item). The second player says 'I went shopping and I bought ...' and repeats the first player's item before adding their own. The third player continues saying the first two items before adding their own. And so on. See how many you can remember.