



# The Importance of Early Language Skills

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019



# The complexity of the English language

What does this say?

ghoti

# fish

How?

gh - 'f' as in enou**gh**

o - as in wo**men**

ti - as in stati**on**

This could be read as FISH!!!



# Concerns



- Children are not coming into Nursery or school with the necessary language skills to understand and communicate.
- Children are lacking in independence skills today.
- Children do not always have the necessary social skills when starting school.
- Some children are not emotionally prepared or ready for the transition to a school setting.



# Some interesting statistics



- Over 1 million children have communication difficulties in the UK (that's 2 or 3 in every class)
- Children often understand more than they can say
- 10% of children in schools have speech, language, communication needs
- Attention and listening skills are very important building blocks in acquiring language.



# Some interesting statistics

- ⦿ Limited language skills, increase the risk for mental health difficulties and problem behaviour.
- ⦿ These children are also more at risk of bullying and may find it difficult to voice their concerns in a potentially dangerous situation.
- ⦿ For some young people, SLCN persists into adulthood so there are long term affects on their ability to contribute to society.
- ⦿ There is a high incidence of SLCN in young offenders.



# Some interesting statistics

- 7% of all children have a speech and language impairment; it's the most prevalent childhood disability.
- 50-90% of children with persistent speech, language and communication difficulties go on to have reading difficulties
- When language difficulties are resolved by age 5 ½ children are more likely to develop good reading and spelling skills





# Why is language important?

- It is an essential life skill.
- Language skills at age 2 can predict reading, maths and writing ability when children start school.
- Vocabulary at age 5 is the most important factor affecting literacy at age 11.
- Good language (particularly at 13) is a strong predictor of better outcomes at GCSE.
- Good communication skills are rated as the most important employability skills needed for young people entering their first job.
- Children with poor vocabulary skills are twice as likely to be unemployed when they reach adulthood.
- 60% of young offenders have low language skills



# Reading



Spending 10 minutes reading together every day:

- Helps your child develop social and emotional skills
- Strengthens their bond with you
- Helps them grow into a confident, happy learner
- Improves vocabulary

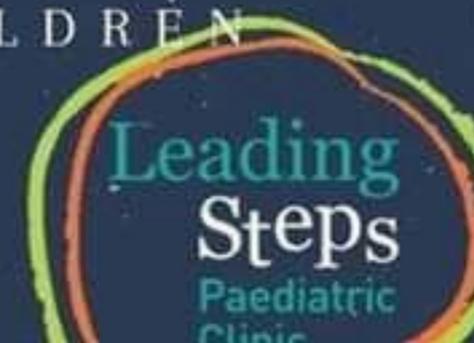


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There is  
no app  
to  
replace  
your lap

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READ TO YOUR  
CHILDREN



# Tips to enjoy books together

- Bring the story to life – make animal noises, change voice for characters, make yourselves laugh
- Cuddle up together as a family and all join in
- Ask questions when reading together (including how and why questions)
- Let your child be the storyteller - they can 'read' the pictures to you.
- Find somewhere quiet (away from any screens and phones)
- The more you talk together, the more words your child will learn.

# Speaking and Listening

## Some Ideas

- Remembering games – shopping basket, going on holiday, e.g I went to the shops and I bought.... , for my birthday I had...
- Describing and guessing games.
- Who am I? (animals – guess from clues, ask questions to find out more)
- Use questions – who, where, when, what, how? To improve children's vocabulary
- Spot the difference – ask the child to look away and change something about you (make it obvious initially)
- Talk table objects – no right or wrong answers be as imaginative as you like



# Remember

- Get down to child's level
- Give children TIME to respond
- Use the right level of language – break things into understandable chunks, rephrase if child does not understand
- Keep things fun!
- Use child's name before giving instructions (ensure you have their attention before continuing)
- **Eliminate distractions (eg. TV, phone!!!)**
- **Be a good role model for the language you want to hear**
- Use visual support if necessary (pics from magazines to reinforce vocabulary)
- PRAISE achievements
- Encourage children to ask if they are confused or unsure of what you are saying



# Remember

- Offer comments rather than always ask questions. Children can switch off from being asked lots of questions – it feels more like an interrogation than a conversation
- Create opportunities for conversation – “Fred, what do you think I should do with the shopping?”
- Talk about things going on in the child’s world
- Mistakes are a good thing! Encourage them to think again.
- Encourage conversation, particularly for quieter children.
- Name that emotion – children need to build up a vocabulary of feelings, but need to be taught what they are. When adults recognise their feelings this can have a calming effect



# Remember

- Encourage conversation, particularly for quieter children.  
E.g. make encouraging noises (Wow!)  
comment on what is happening  
(the paint is dripping!)  
Pass a comment - “I went to the  
park yesterday” this will invite  
children into the conversation.

**IT'S EASY TO DOMINATE  
CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN –**  
“ Get your coat on” , “Come and get your  
dinner”, “Put your toys away”  
So remember to praise, question, comment  
and negotiate with them.

Respond positively to curiosity and  
inquisitiveness.





# Mark making and Writing

- To become good and effective writers children need to develop good core body strength, strong wrists and fingers and have good fine motor skills.
- There are lots of things you can do at home to help.







# Thank You

