



# Ideas for developing Speech and Language

# Understanding and using Pronouns: 'he' and 'she'

- Share books with your child and use pronouns to talk about what is happening (e.g. *she* is jumping, *he* is sleeping).
- When you are out, talk about what other people are doing. Help your child link the pronoun to male/female. (Look at that boy, *he* is hopping. Can you see that lady? *She* is eating).
- Find two toys – one girl (e.g. Queen Elsa) and one boy (e.g. Buzz Lightyear). Demonstrate that the toys can do lots of things (e.g. brush hair, wash face etc.). Emphasise *she* is brushing, *he* is flying.

# Understanding and using Pronouns: 'his' and 'hers'

- During everyday activities emphasise 'his' and 'hers' (e.g. James has put *his* coat on; now mummy is putting *her* coat on).
- Find a picture of a boy and a girl. Cut out pictures of clothes and toys, trying to find similar items (e.g. a girl's coats and a boy's coat etc.) Ask your child to find *his* hat, *her* shoes, *her* scooter.
- Encourage your child to identify whether items are 'his' or 'hers'. Guide them or give a choice (e.g. This is the boy's hat so it is ... hat. Is this *his* hat or *her* hat?)

# Understanding 'behind' and 'in front'

- Gather a few of your child's favourite character toys. Ask your child to put them in different places. (e.g. Put Spiderman *behind* the curtain. Put Barbie *in front* of the sofa.)
- When out and about or around the house, discuss the position of items (e.g. The car is *behind* the bus. The chair is *in front* of the table.)
- Play a hide-and-seek game and describe the location of people/objects (e.g. Lucy is *behind* the door). To increase the challenge, introduce other prepositions ('in', 'on', 'under', 'next to' and 'between').

# Understanding 'first' and 'last'

- As a family, line up and ask your child to stand 'first' or 'last' in the line. If they are unsure, show them (e.g. Daddy is *first* in the line, Sarah is *last* in the line.)
- To help, use visual cues such as pointing to where you would like your child to stand.
- You could also initially only introduce one concept at a time, and once this is understood, add the other.
- To develop further understanding, you could link the concepts to time. (What happened *first* in the story? What was the *last* thing you found?)

# Understanding 'same' and 'different'

- Gather a selection of images/items that are identical and some that are different (e.g. two identical shoes vs. a cup and a plate). Place two pairs of images in front of your child, ask them to identify which are the '*same*' or '*different*'.
- If you finding this tricky, make sure to use items that are completely different such as a pencil and a toy elephant. You could also reinforce '*same*' by collecting pairs of matching items such as socks or two forks.
- To increase the challenge, introduce items are are different but only slightly such as two pencils of different colour, or two different sized spoons.

# Understanding 'long' and 'short'

- Gather together pairs of items that can be described as either long or short (e.g. pencils, trousers, scarves, dolls with '*long*' and '*short*' hair). Select one set of items and ask your child to find the '*long*' pencil etc.
- If you are finding this difficult, draw '*long*' things first such as a '*long*' snake or '*long*' hair. Then introduce the concept of '*not long*' before gradually using the word '*short*'.
- You could also draw pictures together and encourage your child to draw character with '*long*' or '*short*' hair.

# Using comparatives: 'bigger', 'longer', and 'smaller'

- Gather together items/toys that vary in size (e.g. two sizes of a stuffed animal, cups, pencils, cars etc.) Pull out two of the objects and point to the '*smaller*' of the two before pointing to the '*bigger*' one saying: 'This car is big and this car is...' Encourage your child to use '*bigger*'.
- If your child says 'more big', explain that there is a special way of saying that... '*bigger*'.
- If your child is finding this tricky, initially ask them just to *point* to the item that is '*bigger*'. You can also use the phrases '*bigger*' and '*not bigger*'.
- Once your child is confident with '*bigger*' you can move onto other comparatives such as '*smaller*', '*longer*', and '*taller*'.

# Understanding 'why' questions

- Share a story with your child. When you have finished, look through the book again and ask simple questions about what happened (e.g. *Why* was the little boy crying? *Why* did they have to go home?)
- Begin to introduce responding to the 'why' question with 'because...' for some children this can help with unlocking the rest of the sentence.
- Give your child a choice to help with answering the question (Is the little boy crying because he wanted a banana or because he fell in the mud?)

# Learning the meaning of 'why'

- Collect some pictures that show cause and effect. Use these pictures when you ask your child '*why*'. (*'Why'* has the man got his umbrella... because it is raining. *'Why'* is the girl running... because she is trying to catch the bus.)
- Demonstrate the correct response to your child and ask them to repeat.
- Read a story and ask your child '*why*' questions relating to the story.
- You could even use your daily routine to ask '*why*' questions (*'Why'* do we wash our hair?, *'Why'* do we go to school?)

# Understanding and using 'where', 'who' and 'what' questions

- Sing familiar and repetitive nursery rhymes such as 'Old MacDonald' with your child. After each verse ask questions such as: '*Who* is in the song?', '*Where* are they?', '*What* animals are there?', '*What* noise did the animal make?'
- You could use pictures of the things in the nursery rhyme to help prompt your child.
- To increase the challenge you could incorporate more difficult animals into the rhyme.
- Other nursery rhymes that lend well to '*wh-*' questions include: Humpty Dumpty, Jack and Jill, and Incy Wincy Spider.

## Listening to stories to understand 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions

- Read a short story to your child. Once finished, look back and ask questions relating to the story (e.g. *What* did Cinderella wear to the ball? *Where* was the Gingerbread Man made? *Why* did the little Pigs run away from the Fox?)
- Use the pictures in the story to help your child answer your questions (e.g. Was the Gingerbread Man made in the bedroom or the kitchen?)
- You may need to read the story several times before asking any questions to ensure that your child is familiar with the story.
- Once your child is comfortable answering 'what', 'where', and 'why' questions, introduce 'when' and 'how' things happened.

# Talking about things that have happened: 'News Time'

- Ask your child to tell you something that they did over the weekend or when they went out somewhere. Make note of what they have said, encouraging the use of past tense verbs (e.g. went, played, walked, etc.)
- Repeat back what your child has said with the correct grammar (e.g. 'I *goed* to the park and play football.' 'Oh, you *went* to the park and *played* football, I bet that was good!')
- If possible, use pictures, drawings or items to prompt your child.
- Once you have established sharing news, you can begin to ask: 'How did you feel?', 'What did you enjoy the most?' etc.

# Learning to remember and then say the names of multiple items

- Gather a selection of pictures of everyday items, place at least 5 pictures face-down on the table. Choose 3 cards but don't show them to your child. Look at the cards and say what they are (e.g. I've got a hat, a cup and a pencil). Ask your child to tell you what cards you have.
- If you are finding this difficult, start with one or two items. You could also prompt your child by giving them the initial sound of the word or by giving them a clue (e.g. It begins with 'h'. It is an animal that says 'woof').
- Once established gradually increase the number of cards you are asking your child to remember and recall.

# Understanding and using four-word sentences

- Ask your child to find two of their favourite character toys (e.g. Spiderman, Elsa, Batman, Owlette). Explain that they are being naughty and hiding all over the place. Ask your child to: ‘make Batman jump on the table’, ‘make Elsa sit under the chair’.
- If you are finding this tricky, make sure to emphasise the key parts of the sentence: *person, action, preposition, and place*. Correct your child if need be (e.g. if your child places the toy somewhere else. ‘Owlette is lying *on* the table, make Owlette lie *under* the table).
- You could also reverse the roles so your child is telling *you* where to put the toys!

# Playing sociably and learning to share

- Play alongside your child as if you were another child. Practise asking for objects or toys rather than just taking them.
- Use verbal praise as a reward for good sharing and cooperative play.
- When circumstances allow, provide opportunities for your child to play with others and set up activities where two children need to take turns (e.g. playing a game or completing a puzzle).
- Reduce adult involvement when multiple children are playing together. Encourage the children to play together whilst you do something else.

## Taking turns in a small group

- As a family, sit together in a circle. The aim of the activity is to pass a sound, gesture or object around the circle. Lead the activity by making a sound and encouraging it to be passed around from person to person. Each person must wait for the previous person to finish before it is their turn.
- You could use visual prompts or say each others name to remind them who's turn it is next (e.g. 'Now it is Catherine's turn, next it will be Nancy's turn').
- To further develop this skill have a go at turn taking games such as: Ker-Plunk, Pairs, Pop-Up Pirate, Jenga etc.

# Role Play

- Encourage your child to dress up and pretend to be someone different (e.g. vet, train driver, doctor, cowboy, astronaut, or animal etc.) Make pretend environment together using what you have at home and have a go at acting out different scenarios.
- You may need to take the lead by making suggestions and encourage your child to join in.
- Have a go at reading stories and encourage your child to act out the story together, you could even incorporate their favourite toys.