



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

CONTENTS

1. Creating a Communication Friendly Environment
 2. Auditory Memory
 3. Attention and Listening
4. Narrative, Sequencing and Time Concepts
 5. Concept Development
 6. Complex Grammar
7. Semantics / Word Finding
 8. Thinking Skills
9. Skills for Social Communication
 10. Stammering / Dysfluency
11. Supporting Children with Speech Difficulties



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Creating a Communication Friendly Environment

A Communication Friendly Environment (CFE) is one that includes all learners and enables them to access and share information in the most appropriate way.

Communication is about the sending and receiving of messages. It is a two way process. You need someone to send the message and someone to receive it. The message could be words, gestures, written information, pictures/symbols, etc.

An environment that is communication friendly is one that is supportive and helpful to the sending and receiving of messages.

If we consider the environment we could think about 3 different aspects:

- Support systems;
- The role of the speaker;
- The physical environment.

Support Systems

We have learnt a lot recently about how people learn. A small group of people learn through listening, **auditory learners**. They are the sort of people who respond to rhythms, listen to sounds in what people say, but are easily distracted by noisy environments.

Many more people are **visual learners**. They need to see something to understand. They will typically look for patterns, can understand mind maps and will know how things work just by looking.

A further group of people need to 'do' to learn. They are called **kinaesthetic learners**. They will often use a lot of gesture; will like to take things apart to see how they work. They are often not good at sitting still. Research has shown that learning by doing is the slowest way of learning, but once learnt in this way, will not be forgotten. Exactly like riding a bike.

Of course, most people have a mixture of learning styles and this information has taught us that we need to present information through all of these modes.

Find out what kind of learning style works best for you or your pupils by completing the questionnaire at the end of this section.

There are lots of strategies that will support students in understanding information. For visual learners you can use real objects to support spoken information e.g. concepts of rough smooth can be demonstrated by using a brick and glass or using photographs for more complex concepts/vocabulary e.g. Topics such as science/history. Kinaesthetic Learners may benefit from acting out and demonstrating new concepts or information in order to help them learn the information more easily.

- Labelling equipment to aid independence



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Using symbols to explain regular routines
- Symbols help with choice making- they allow the child to ask, comment and tell news
- Symbols help communication between home and school e.g. home/school book/diary
- Symbols, photographs and real objects help understanding of tricky concepts e.g. first, last, next
- Visual timetables not only reduce anxiety, but are an important way of teaching time concepts, first, next, last, finished, etc. They can also help children to:
 - o become familiar with routines;
 - o understand what is expected;
 - o help them predict what will happen next.

Using visual timetables

Each session of the day has a symbol to represent that time slot, for example, literacy, dinner, home time. These can be used for a whole class or an individual. Having the timetable divided into slots allows for it to be presented session by session or a whole day/week. Ensure the timetable is displayed at a level where children can easily use and touch it.

The Role of the Speaker

The role the speaker plays in enabling listeners to access to information is perhaps the most important. It is the speaker's responsibility to:

- Speak at a level the listener(s) can understand, by:
 - o Slowing down the rate of delivery
 - o Allowing more time for the listener to respond
 - o Using fewer words or less complicated language
 - o Using good eye contact
 - o Using the listener's name to get their attention
 - o Using gestures to support what is said

The Physical Environment

There is much in the physical environment that can either help or hinder the transfer of information. If the classroom is noisy it will be a distraction especially for those pupils who find attention difficult. If the children are sitting on chairs of the wrong height, they are more likely to be wriggling to get comfortable than listening to what



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

is said or looking at what they are shown (especially if these do not match the tables).

Lighting is important in the classroom. Are the children looking directly towards the light source so adults' faces are in shadow, or is the glare from the windows distracting from what is drawn/written on the whiteboard or on laminated worksheets?

We love to see attractive displays on the walls, but we should consider presenting information from a position that is as distraction free as possible.

Can we be sure it is us that has the child's attention not the exciting display behind us? A corner is a good place to deliver information from. Not only is it easier to have a clear background but attention is funnelled towards the speaker.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Auditory Memory

Auditory memory is the ability to remember information you have heard.

There are three different types of memory:

- Immediate recall (**short-term memory**)
- Retention of information while processing and acting on it (**working memory**)
- Storage of information for future use (**long-term memory**).

Children with language problems often have difficulty with auditory memory. These children find it hard to remember all of what they hear. Their ability to recall what they have just heard, in the right order, and to retain the information long enough for it to be processed and acted upon is seriously affected. Problems with short-term memory can lead to difficulty in storing vocabulary and information in long-term memory.

Impact of Auditory Memory Problems in the classroom:

- Loss of concentration and listening
- Difficulty following instructions
- Difficulty keeping track of class stories and discussions
- Reduced memory for curriculum content
- Literacy – ‘holding onto’ sounds, words and sentences for reading and writing
- reduced self-esteem

Children’s memory capacity develops through pre-school and Key Stage 1. After about eight years the basic capacity is established, but children and adults apply strategies to get the most from their memories. These strategies, which are described below, can be explicitly taught to children.

What supports memory for auditory information? :

- Active listening and looking
- Visuals & hands on experience – visual memory and memory for personal experiences is often a strength in these children
- Repetition – the more opportunities to retain the information the better
- Organisation of the information so that the memory has more ‘hooks’ to retain it, e.g. stories, meaningful grouping, mind maps



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Strategies to Aid Auditory Memory

Adult Strategies

- You can help by:
 - o Presenting the big picture first, then the details.
 - o Giving instructions out sequentially i.e. in the order in which you wish the child to carry them out.
 - o Breaking down longer instructions into shorter chunks. Wait until the child has completed one part of the instructions before giving them the next part.
- Accompany your spoken request with visual cues, e.g.: pointing, gesturing or signing, symbol systems/pictures
- Provide a visual record of what needs to be remembered produced by an adult (or the child himself): A picture, A written list, Spider diagram
- Use recording devices, e.g. Talk Tins to repeat sentences for writing

Child Strategies

- Encourage active listening
 - o Looking at the speaker or the learning materials
 - o Thinking about the words
 - Children can be specifically taught helpful strategies:
 - o To pick out and remember only the key words rather than trying to remember a whole sentence.
 - o To use a rehearsal technique i.e. repeat the key words of the instruction aloud or under their breath in order to aid retention.
 - o Encourage visualisation techniques. Let the child imagine himself doing the actions – really see it in his head.
 - o Make comical connections between pieces of information, items in a list, etc.
 - Mnemonics:
 - Use of clarification strategies, e.g. encourage the child to ask a friend or adult.
 - o Ask for repetition.
 - o Ask for signing/visual cue.
 - o Tell you what they *can* remember
 - Be open with the child about the challenge of remembering what you hear
- It is something that you have to work at. Even adults find it difficult sometimes!



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Below are the ages at which children are expected to make use of memory strategies:

4 years: The child does not realise that strategies are available to help their memory.

5 – 6 years: The child names things, often out loud, to help their memory.

7 years: The child realises that strategies are available but cannot use them spontaneously. They need an adult to show them what to do.

10 years: The child can spontaneously use rehearsal, i.e. repeating specific information to improve their memory.

11 years : The child can name things (silently), rehearse, chunk and group information without prompts from an adult.

Auditory Memory Activities

The following games work best in a small group. The activities provide an opportunity to discuss and try out memory strategies. Always encourage the children to reflect on *how* they remembered. Make connections to real-life, classroom remembering situations.

For children under 7years the main focus will be on listening, looking, gestures and rehearsal. With older children explore some of the other strategies listed above.

Encourage children to ask for repetition. Adapt the demands to each child's level.

- Simon says: Give the child verbal instructions. Start with only two actions then build up, e.g. stand up, then clap your hands. cross your legs, touch your nose, put your right hand on your left knee.

The child could also choose a classmate and give the next instruction.

- Barrier Games: Children work in pairs and have a screen between them. One child has a picture or model and he has to give instructions for the other player to follow. Once complete, the screen is drawn back and the two compared.

- Pass the Pen: Pass an object around the group. Each child makes a comment, the next child repeats this and adds a new comment. For example: "You write with it". "You write with it and it has one sharp end and one blunt end", etc.

- Shopping Game: Start by saying "I went shopping and I bought an orange". The next player must repeat this phrase and add a new item, e.g. "I went shopping and I bought an orange and some shoes".

Try adding an action to go with each new item – does this make it easier to remember the words? This game may be varied to suit any class topic. It helps to reinforce vocabulary as well as memory.

For example: "I went to the cinema and I saw....." + titles of films.

"I went to the library and I borrowed.." + titles of books.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Drawing Pictures: Two pupils follow your instructions to draw a picture: For example: “Draw a blue triangle, under the green circle.” “Draw 2 lines next to the tree.” “Draw a big yellow rectangle to the left of the blue DX square.”

- **Silly Sentences:** Write silly sentences or tongue twisters on strips of paper. Divide the groups into teams. Take turns to read the sentences and a player from a different team has to repeat the sentence correctly. If correct, the player keeps the strip. The team having the most strips wins. Pupils can write their own strips. The sentences don't have to be silly. The game could also be used to work on topics or specific concepts.
- **Echoes:** Two pupils are chosen. One is the caller and the other is the echo. The caller says a sentence or reads one from a book. The echo must repeat the sentence. The sentences could involve poetry, sensible or silly sentences, etc. Similarly Chinese whispers can be played.
- **Messages:** One child asks another to pass on a message. For example: “John please tell Mum.....” The other child has to carry out that direction. Extend this to real message taking, e.g. to the school office
- **Odd One Out:** Read out 4 or 5 words and the pupil has to say which word is the odd one out. Alternatively, the child could say how the words are related. Vary the number of items and complexity according to individual need.
- **Opposites:** Ask children to recall the opposites of sentences. For example: “The man got in the car and drove to the big road going north.” “The lady got out of the lorry and walked to the little lane going south.”
- **Read a short paragraph to your child and ask him/her to tell you 3 important facts in the correct sequence.** Use the words ‘first’, ‘next’, ‘last’. Have the numbers 1, 2, 3 on pieces of card on the table in front of you. To help your child, when you read the information point to number 1 as you give the first fact then number 2, etc. This will help him/her to visualise and retain the information.
- **Read a short paragraph to your child and ask him/her to re-tell it in his/her own words.** Make sure your child keeps to the subject and does not bring in irrelevant information. If he/she cannot remember enough about the story, prompt with key questions.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Attention and Listening

Attention and listening skills are foundation skills that underlie successful language development and learning. Professionals report an increasing number of children are entering school with delayed attention and listening skills. Delayed attention and listening skills are also a common feature of children with impairments in other areas (e.g. language impairments, ADHD, global developmental delay, children with 'glue ear').

How does it develop?

Like many skills, attention and listening skills are acquired in an identified pattern:

Age Stage

By 2 years - Can concentrate for some time on an activity of their own choosing but cannot tolerate intervention from others. Attention is single channelled which means that the child can concentrate on one thing to the exclusion of everything else

By 3 years- Attention is still single-channelled. Children need to stop their play to be able to listen. Beginning to be able to attend to an adult chosen activity Reception Attention is still single-channelled but the child can now switch their attention between an activity and an adult's instruction.

Year 1 - Attention span is still quite short. The child is able to continue with a straightforward activity and listen to a simple instruction at the same time

Year 2 - Ability to listen to instructions and complete tasks at the same time is well established. Able to block out unnecessary information and noise

Attention and listening skills usually need to be explicitly taught to develop fully.

How do children with poor attention and listening present in the classroom?

- Easily distracted
- Fidgety
- Require a high level of support to complete tasks
- Unsure how to start a task
- Can distract others
- May be passive and quiet
- Struggles to follow instructions
- Doesn't look at adult speaking



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Strategies for the teacher

- Teach active listening strategies. E.g. good sitting, good looking, good taking turns, good thinking about the words (for older children). Discuss what each of these points would look and feel like. Give children explicit praise when they are showing active listening (e.g. 'You are looking at me so I know you are listening' or 'Good sitting. Your legs are crossed and you have still hands')
- Make sure that you have the child's attention before giving an instruction. Say the child's name and make sure that they are looking at you
- Support spoken instructions with visual cues
- Be aware of the variety of learning styles and incorporate activities that tap into all of them in your teaching
- Minimise visual and auditory distractions, especially around areas such as the whiteboard
- Encourage the pupil to repeat the instruction back to you before s/he starts the task
- Be aware of using complex language and vocabulary
- An egg timer or similar can be used to provide a visual cue as to the length of the activity and help maintain attention



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Narrative

Being able to tell a story is one of the fundamental aspects of communication. Very young children's stories consist of a haphazard collection of labels and descriptions of events. Their story-telling skills gradually develop, via the emergence of a central theme and cause-and-effect, to a fully developed narrative that includes a plot, characters and a logically ordered sequence of events with an ending.

Whether children are describing a picture or relating what they did last night, the four elements of 'who', 'what', 'where' and 'when' are key. These convey the basic information concerning any scenario: who did what, to whom, when and where. Children have also to learn how to sequence a series of events, and this involves a range of skills:

- Understanding cause and effect
- Understanding related concepts: 'first, then' and 'first, next, last'
- Understanding concepts 'after' and 'before'
- Using conjunctions ('and', 'then', 'because' etc.) in order to link events and ideas

They also need to be able to attribute feelings to characters in a story and to understand motivation.

Many children with language difficulties do not clearly understand the four concepts, 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when' and they also find it difficult to sequence a series of events. It may therefore be necessary to work on establishing these foundational skills before considering more complex aspects of story-telling such as the ability to describe, infer, predict, and to use humour and irony.

This section gives ideas for working through the four basic elements and introduces some ideas on sequencing and generating ideas. Many other language skills are involved in narrative: see relevant sections, such as

'Complex Grammar' for marking tense (to indicate an event in the past, present or future) or 'Semantics' for vocabulary development. Make cue cards for each element: who? what? were? when?. Display these in the classroom to refer to when you are discussing stories (see Black Sheep



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Working on 'Who'

'Who' is an appropriate starting-point, as most actions, events or states require a 'who' aspect.

Stage 1: Identifying 'who'

- Pass an object around the group. You could clap, sing a rhyme or play music, when the music stops – ask **'who'** has the ball'?
- Roll a ball or throw a beanbag. Get the child to name 'who' they will roll the ball to next and pass it on.
- Use some dressing up clothes, hats, scarves, and gloves. Everybody dresses up, then the adult says, "Who's got the on?", for example hat, glasses, etc.
- Vary the above game by using pictures of people with different disguises on and pass these round, or they could be photos of people dressed up.

Stage 2

- Give the children pictures of people in different places. For example, a fair, park, seaside, shops, school. Adult asks, "Who is at the?", for example, fair, park.
- Reinforce the character in a book at story time or in literacy. Use the pictures in the book to visually reinforce 'who' you are talking about. With children who have lower levels of understanding try using an actual toy or even have an adult to act out the role of the character asking, "Who am I?"
- Give the children a range of pictures of 'subjects'. Remember the subject doesn't need to be a person it may be an animal, get the child to choose 'who' and put them in different places.
- Increase the difficulty of this task by getting the child to do this with several who's and where's.
- Give the children / child different pictures of subjects for example, cat, dog, elephant, monkey etc. Get the children to take it in turns describing 'who' they have and guessing whom someone else has from a description. You could also use well known characters from stories, e.g. Father Christmas, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, or more general characters, a ghost, fairy, giant etc.
- Move on to introducing characters from every day life for example, who we see at the doctors, dentists, shop, garage etc.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Working on 'Where'

Stage 1

- We have already introduced 'where' in pictures in Stage 2 of 'who'. Build on this by revisiting these games and establishing what is meant by 'where'.
- Put pictures around the room to represent different places. Adult tells the child to go to the seaside, bank, shop, etc.
- Children stand in different places, Adult asks 'where' is.....
- Adult hides pictures or objects around the room and asks "Where is.....?"
- Lay pictures of different places on the floor. The child throws a beanbag on to the pictures talking about 'where' they are throwing it or 'where' it lands.

Stage 2

- Talk about 'where' people are/are going in stories. These can be well known fictional stories moving on to the child's own stories.
- Give the child different pictures of scenes such as a zoo, farm, seaside etc. and a range of animals. The child has to decide 'who' goes 'where'. This is easier if the places are unrelated such as a castle and a farm, but more difficult if they are closely related or subcategories like a newsagents and a supermarket.
- These games can be extended by giving them a supermarket picture and a range of items and they have to decide 'where' it belongs.

Working on 'What'

This section refers to 'what' the 'who' is doing and at a basic level can just be a single verb, or it may refer to what happened within a story. The transition from recognising a single action to a sequence of events can be a big one for children with language difficulties.

Stage 1

- Choose a character; this could be a character in the reading scheme, a weekly story or an actual toy for children who need more support. Get the character to perform certain actions, such as dancing, jumping, running, washing etc. The child has to identify what the subject (who) is doing.
- Take it in turns turning over pictures of people doing different things; the child has to say what they are doing.
- Reinforce 'what' in action games, rhymes, and activities such as P.E.

Stage 2

- Deal the cards out between the children; they then have to mime 'what' the person on the card is doing.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Introduce the idea of looking at 'what' happens next in a sequence of events. For example, using sequence cards lay out the first one or two but then ask the child if they can think about what might be next. Start with fairly easy predictable sequences so that not too much inference is required.
- Reinforce the child's own experience so talk about 'what' they did. Initially this may need to be in the here and now, but then extended to, yesterday, or at the weekend as the child's understanding of these concepts establishes.

Stage 3

- Build on 'what' as you develop sequencing and story telling skills. For example, initially talk about what happened in familiar stories, but now develop this into encouraging them to talk about what may happen in their own stories.

Working on 'When'

The concept of 'when' is firmly linked to the understanding of other concepts. Working specifically on these will considerably support their concept development and therefore understanding.

- Initially it may help to draw the child's attention to 'when' in familiar stories. It will be easier to use 'when' concepts that are supported by a visual reinforcer, such as in the morning, at night or in different types of weather.
- Use sequencing activities to support understanding of 'when' over a longer time period. For example choose a character, use pictures to show him/her doing different things over the day. Talk about 'when' he went to the shops, rode his bike etc.
- Relate this idea to the child's own experience. Use the timetable template (Appendix A) to encourage the child to draw or stick something into each section to remind them of something they did each day. The idea is to give them a visual referent to help them make the link between passed time, and relating that to something they did.
- The timetable (Appendix A) can be extended and more detail added as the child's understanding develops to include morning, afternoon, evening for each day.
- Use the 'when' wheel template (Appendix B) to work on helping the child understand how a character can do different things throughout the week.
- Extend the use of this wheel (Appendix B) by sticking your own pictures to represent different things the character may do. Use things that are in the child's own experience. You could even stick a picture of the child and things they do in their week on the wheel.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Sequencing and Time Concepts

Stage 1

Use everyday activities to develop the child's awareness that all events follow a sequence.

For example: dressing for P.E. going to the dining hall for lunch painting a picture playing a game.

Once you are satisfied that the child has achieved an understanding of the concept of sequencing at stage 1, then move onto stage 2.

Stage 2

Use pictures to show the stages in a sequence of events. For example: making a sandwich taking a bath going for a walk in different types of weather.

Begin with just 3 pictures, then as the child is able to achieve this 8 out of 10 times, increase the number of pictures in the sequence to four then five pictures. You could use the same subject and simply increase the detail.

For example: A 3 picture sequence of making a sandwich:

1. put the butter and jam on one slice of bread.
2. put the other slice on top
3. cut in half with a knife.

A 4 picture sequence of making a sandwich:

1. get a loaf of bread
2. put the butter and jam on one slice of bread.
3. put the other slice on top
4. cut in half with a knife.

A 5 picture sequence of making a sandwich:

1. get a loaf of bread
2. put the butter and jam on one slice of bread.
3. put the other slice on top
4. cut in half with a knife
5. eat the sandwich.

It is important that the activities you choose are within the life experience of the individual child. This will ensure that they only need to learn about sequencing, and that any mistakes they make relate to sequencing and not to lack of knowledge about the event being sequenced.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Once you are satisfied that the child has achieved an understanding of the concept of sequencing at stage 2, then move onto stage 3. Remember to use vocabulary such as first, next, last to help develop understanding of time concepts.

Stage 3

Use three sequencing pictures to introduce the idea that there is a beginning, middle and an end to a sequence of events. Present the child with the two cards that make the beginning and the middle of the sequence. Then give the child a choice of pictures so that they can choose an ending. It may be useful to discuss with the child why they made that choice.

The next stage would be to give them the middle and end of the sequence and ask them to decide which picture goes at the beginning. Finally ask them to decide what the middle of the sequence could be. This activity can be made more fun if the child is allowed to choose a beginning, middle or end to the sequence that is silly. Once you are satisfied that the child has achieved an understanding of the concept of sequencing at stage 3, then move onto stage 4.

Stage 4

This is similar to stage 3 although this time allow the child to generate their own beginning, middle or end to the sequences, following the same steps as stage 3.

Once you are satisfied that the child has achieved an understanding of the concept of sequencing at stage 4, then move onto stage 5.

Stage 5

The child has to use their imagination and predict what may happen next in a sequence. It is necessary to develop the child's understanding that there are consequences to their actions.

Consequences Game:

Give the child 'what will happen if' scenarios, for example, what will happen if Johnny goes out in the rain without a coat, forgets his or her P.E. kit, forgets his homework, etc This skill is closely related to problem solving and inferencing and further suggestions and ideas can be found in the 'Verbal Reasoning and Inferencing'

Generating a Story

This section draws on all the skills and elements covered in the narrative section and the aim is to develop and combine the skills needed to generate a story.

Stage 1

Use a story that is well known to the child. Create pictures that represent the characters or places in the story and ask the child to retell the story using the pictures for support.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Stage 2

This is similar to Stage 1 but without the pictures for support. A story that is less familiar to the child could also be used but it may be necessary to tell the child the story to begin with to refresh their memory.

Stage 3

Generating the Main Idea for a Story

This is the beginning of the child generating his own story. It may be useful to begin with the child selecting from a choice of ideas of what the story is going to be about and then gradually fading out the level of support so eventually he is able to generate his own idea.

Stage 4

It is essential that the child has a good understanding that stories contain a beginning, middle and end. This is covered in another part of the narrative section. When the child requires less support at stage 3 to generate his own idea for a story the next step involves the child generating the main characters in the story. Provide the other key elements such as what happened initially. A story board could be used with pictures to help the child plan the sequence of events in the story. This could be divided into the beginning, middle and end to make sure these elements are covered.

Stage 5

Again this is similar to the previous stage but with less support. For example a blank story board could be used but with no pictures.

Getting the Main Idea

This section is to help children understand the main idea behind a story. There are activities that target the key skills involved such as: selecting an object or picture that is relevant to a story, deciding on an appropriate title for a story and deciding on the most important parts in the story. The bases for these ideas have been taken from:

'Speaking, Listening & Understanding – Games for Young Children' by

Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring (2003) published by Speechmark

- Write some sentences out and have four objects with only one of them relevant to the sentence. Read the sentence out and ask the child to decide which object is important to the sentence. This could also be done with pictures when a child is successful with objects.
- Read a short story straight through. Then give the child some paper and pencils. Read the story pausing at the end of each paragraph and ask the child to draw the most important parts in the story. This again could also be adapted to use pictures.
- Think up some possible titles and generate a short story to go with each title. Give the child two or three titles and read one of the stories. Ask the child to choose the right title to go with story.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Use fairy stories. Generate a sheet of pictures to go along with the story including some items not in the story. Read the story once. Then explain that you are going to read the story again and that some of the pictures will be in the story. Read the story again asking the child to tick the pictures that are in the story.
- Before you begin tell the child that the writer didn't have time to finish the story. Then read a story pausing at the end of each paragraph. Ask the child to draw the most important parts of the story. When you get to the end leave it out and ask the child to think of a suitable ending. It is important that the ending relates to the rest of the story.
- This activity is most suitable for a group of children. Have a bag of objects with only one object that is going to be 'key' to the story. Let each child choose an object from the bag. Explain that only one child has got something that is 'key' to the story. Read the story and when it is finished ask who has the object that is really important in the story.
- Again this activity is most suitable for a group of children. Choose a child to represent each destination and ask them to stand in a different part of the room holding up their destination label. Generate some short paragraphs detailing a trip that features the destinations. The rest of the children form pairs and have to listen to the paragraph about their trip. They have to then go to each of the destinations in the correct order as they appeared in the paragraph.

Use visual resources and classroom routines to support the development of time concepts and sequencing skills:

- Use a visual timetable as you talk about 'now' and 'later', 'first' and 'then' to develop these concepts and encourage left to right scanning for whole class or small group work
- Reinforce 'today' and 'yesterday' by using a visual class calendar to support spoken references, following a regular and predictable routine (e.g. describing the weather)
- Extend to include 'tomorrow', 'this/last/next week' in discussion of special events, holidays etc.
- When symbols and visual timetable are not to hand, use quick and simple drawings (e.g. 'stick' men)
- Use narrative templates ('storyboards') to help children generate and organise the different elements of a narrative
- Use timelines with symbols or drawings to make visual representations of alternative scenarios and outcomes in activities such as 'Consequences Game'

See Maggie Johnson, 'Helping Children Hang on Your Every Word' (2007) published by QEd Publications (address on page 15) for further ideas, and especially examples of narrative templates and different timeline formats.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Draw a picture or stick something into one box each day to remind you of what you did that day.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Concept Development: Time Concepts

Introduction

When we talk about time concepts we are referring to an individual's ability to see time as continuous. In developing this ability they become able to separate out the past and the future from what's happening in the here and now (the present).

In order for children to do this they need to understand many different concepts such as:

- Before / After
- Now / Soon
- Early / Late
- The sequence of the Days of the Week
- The sequence of the Months of the Year
- Seasons
- Past / Present and Future

Children with language difficulties may need specific teaching of many of the concepts relating to time. These concepts may also play a significant part in the overall understanding of the concept of 'when' which is covered in the narrative section of this pack.

For a child who does not understand the concept of time it can be very disorientating. Visual timetables may be useful to establish the regular routine of events. These can then be adapted to incorporate any special events. (See 'Classroom Strategies' Section).

For example – A visual timetable can be used for the day's lessons or as an individual activity plan.

Working on 'Before/After'

The child will need concrete experience in every day situations in order to learn and develop this understanding.

Activities

- Ask a child to go and stand in a line 'before / after' another child you identify when they are queuing for dinner, lining up to go into assembly etc.
- You can also use objects and ask the child to place them in a line 'before/ after' another object. When the child has developed an understanding of the concept in isolation they need to be able to understand it in simple instructions.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Give the child simple instructions, for example: Before you touch your nose, touch your ears. After you clap your hands touch your feet. These can very easily be incorporated into P.E. or as a warm up activity in group time.

- The above activity can also be made more difficult by using objects and then pictures. Using symbols and signs will also support their development of this concept.

When the child can easily follow simple instructions containing 'before / after' they are beginning to understand the concept in relation to a sequence of events. To develop this further you can:

- Talk about a child's routine and what they are doing, for example: Do you put your socks on 'before/after' your shoes? Do you put your trousers/skirt on 'before/after' your pants?

- Divide a piece of paper into three columns 'morning', 'afternoon', and 'evening'. Ask the child to suggest things associated with these times of the day and draw them under the headings. You can then ask the child "What do you do before / after?" The above activity will also help develop their concept of the different parts of the day.

Working on Yesterday/Today/Tomorrow

This concept is also closely related to developing the child's understanding of the days of the week.

Activities

- Have a calendar and symbols (e.g. widget) for yesterday, today and tomorrow. In the morning ask the child to place the symbols on the appropriate days of the week. Talk about what day it is today, tomorrow etc.

- It may also be useful to ask the child to tell you something that they did yesterday or are going to do today. Closely related to the development of this concept is the understanding of the past, present and future. The grammatical element (verb tenses) is covered in the Complex Grammar section of this pack.

Activities

- Think of events that are in the child's experience e.g. birthdays, Christmas, holidays, trips at school (both past and future). Divide a piece of paper into 3 columns. You can use drawings, pictures or symbols to represent the different events. Ask the child to place them in the appropriate column.

- Some of the activities in the narrative section of the pack would also be appropriate for developing this concept such as the 'When' wheel and the diary for days of the week. You could talk about which was in the past, future etc.

Working on the Days of the Week

Development of a child's understanding of this concept will help them to tolerate the passage of time more easily



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Activities

- Practise chanting the days of the week. Link this in to talking about what day it is today, tomorrow and yesterday. Talk about particular things they are going to do.
- Use the 'when' wheel in the 'Narrative' section of this file. Ask the child to think of something that they do on each day e.g. on Thursday they do P.E. This wheel will help them appreciate it as a continuous cycle. When the child understands the sequence they may need help in being able to manipulate it in their heads.

Activities

- Ask child to tell which day comes 'before/after' Tuesday etc. It is important that they understand the concept of 'before/after' before you do this.
- Activities used in yesterday, today and tomorrow will also help them appreciate it as a continuous cycle.

Working on Months of the Year / Seasons

Activities

- Practise chanting the months of the year.
- Talk about what month it is now.
- Make a chart showing which month peoples' birthdays fall, add in Christmas, Easter, Summer Holidays, Bonfire Night and any other significant dates or festivals in the year.
- It may be useful to represent this as wheel so that the child will begin to understand it as a continuous cycle.
- Use similar activities as for Days of the Week and ask the child which month comes 'before / after' January etc.

Working on Past, Present and Future

- Use a consistent set of gestures to accompany these words
- Display a time line on the classroom wall. Colour code the line eg. past = red, present = blue, future = green. Add pictures to show relative time. For example, dinosaurs in the distant past and Victorians in the more recent past, for the future you would all the Olympics and 'being an adult'.
- Add written phrases to your time line: Ages ago A long time ago A little while ago Just now Immediately Soon Later

Spatial Concepts

Introduction

A spatial concept is any concept that refers to the position of something. The list below covers many of the common spatial concepts but is not exhaustive, so you may be able to add to it. Many of these spatial concepts directly map onto concepts



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

to do with time. Children will usually understand the spatial concept before the temporal one, for example, “Who is first in the queue?” will be understood before “What was the first thing we did?”, as the temporal concept is more abstract. (Temporal Concepts will be developed through sequencing activities in the ‘Narrative’ section.)

In

On/under

Next to

Beside

In front of/behind

First/last

Middle

Top/bottom

Numeric position, for example, first, fifth, etc.

At the beginning of/at the end of

Between

Closest to/farthest from

Nearest

To the right of/to the left of

Separated by

Above/below

General Strategies

- Understanding of concepts always comes before the ability to use the concepts appropriately in spoken language. So it is important to work on the child’s understanding of spatial concepts before expecting them to be able to use the concepts in spoken language.
- Lots of spatial/time concepts fall naturally into pairs, for example, in front of/behind, on/under, above/below, before/after, early/later. It is a good idea to teach these together as this will aid the child’s understanding of them. Be aware that for some children with limited processing auditory memory skills you may need to teach one concept first for example ‘on’ versus ‘not on’. Once established then follow with the contrast, for example ‘on’ and ‘off’.
- When teaching spatial concepts, keep instructions simple so the child only has to focus on understanding the particular concept being worked upon.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Using gesture to represent the spatial concept will help the child's understanding of the spoken word. Makaton signing may be beneficial
- Always use real objects to develop understanding.

Developing Understanding of Spatial Concepts

For any spatial concept or pair of spatial concepts, try working through the following steps to develop understanding:

- Give the child opportunities to physically experience that spatial concept, for example, if 'under' is being targeted, let the child crawl under mats, sit under a table, etc. Try to provide lots of different examples of the spatial concept so that the child learns the full range of the concept's meaning.
- Then ask the child to position figures/objects in the correct place according to the spatial concept being worked on, for example, 'put the man between the car and the train', or 'put the rubber between the pencil and the sharpener'.

NB: Try to keep instructions short, otherwise you are testing the child's memory as well as their ability to understand the concept.

- Once the child is consistently succeeding with this, you can move onto practising the spatial concept using picture materials, for example, picture cards, worksheets. A recommended resources list is included in this file. Games can be played where a selection of pictures is placed in front of the child and they have to select the correct one from your description.

NB: It is important to have a selection of pictures where the only difference is the spatial concept, for example, a cat in/on and under a bucket. You can also try drawing activities where the child has to draw certain items in particular places on a background scene, for example, 'draw a cat in front of the tree'.

o Stickers with background scenes are also useful; the child can follow instructions to place the stickers in specific places.

- Once the child is consistently able to follow these instructions, they are ready to practice using the spatial concept in spoken language. It is still important for you to model the use of the chosen spatial concepts in lots of different contexts so that the child learns to generalise the meaning of the concept and apply it to everyday situations.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Using Spatial Concepts in Spoken Language

Once you have worked through the steps above, you can begin encouraging the child to use the spatial concept you have worked on in their speech. Encourage the child to use the gesture to help them to remember the word if necessary.

Work through the following steps:

- Use object and toys. Ask the child to tell you where to put the objects. If they find it difficult to use the words, offer a choice, “Shall I put it ‘on’ or ‘under’?”
- Once the child can do this consistently, you can use picture materials. The child has to describe where the object is in the picture. At first, focus on just getting the correct use of the spatial concept, for example, ‘under’. Then encourage the use of it in a complete sentence, for example, ‘the mouse is ‘under’ the chair’.
- Try playing barrier games. The child has a completed picture that you can’t see. The child has to tell you where to place your pieces in order to make up the same picture. Make sure that this involves lots of use of the target spatial concept. Then compare your pictures at the end. Stickers and background scenes or felt scenes are useful for this game.
- Once the child is successful at using the target spatial concept in structured activities, focus on helping them to generalise this into everyday activities by modelling the use of it in everyday situations, for example, ‘Look, Jack is standing ‘between’ Sally and John’.

Understanding spatial concepts will greatly enhance the child’s ability to understand the concept of ‘where’. Further activities may be found in the ‘Narrative’ section of this file.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Complex Grammar

Complex grammar is being able to form complete sentences that include:

- past, present and future tenses, for example:
- auxiliary verbs: is, are;
- comparatives: big, bigger, biggest;
- plurals: cats, glasses, children;
- pronouns: he, she, they, them;
- conjunctions: and, but, because.

If a child has difficulty with using complex grammar, it:

- will make expressive language appear disjointed or immature;
- will make written work fragmented;
- will reduce capacity to express ideas, thoughts and feelings effectively;
- may have an effect on fluency;
- may reduce self confidence;
- may impact on social interaction.

This section has been divided into the above areas and activities/ideas have been included.

Tenses (Present, Past, Future)

To indicate tense we change the ending of verbs depending on whether something has already happened, is happening or will happen in the future. Wherever possible use opportunities to link verb learning to curriculum topics. Using a visual timetable is a useful aid for verb learning.

Present Tense

Present tense refers to things that are happening now. It is the simplest tense for children to learn and therefore the first to be acquired. If a child has difficulty with tenses it is best to start with this one. (Make sure the child is familiar with a selection of basic verbs first).

To make a sentence in the present tense, you can add 'ing' to the main verb and an auxiliary (a word that helps the verb) to complete the sentence. For example, the boy is kicking a ball; they are laughing.

Activities for working on 'ing'

- Comment on what is being done to raise awareness of verb endings in context, for example, 'I am rolling the ball' (while you roll the ball); (name) is jumping.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Have a picture of someone doing an action, for example, photographs of people known to the children, verb Colour cards:

- o hold up a picture and ask the child to name the action;

- o put 3 pictures on the table and ask the child to point to the picture showing a particular action;

- o look at a picture book and say what the characters are doing;

- o look at a video and comment on what the characters are doing and ask the child to say what the characters are doing.

In the present tense, the verb 'to be' changes according to the subject, for example:

- I am confused;
- he/she is tired;
- you are sunburnt;
- we are young, free and single;
- they are hungry.

Children sometimes tend to miss out the verb 'to be' in a present tense sentence, for example, 'you sunburnt' instead of 'you are sunburnt'.

Activities for working on 'is' and 'are' and other auxiliary verbs

- Model sentences emphasising the auxiliary verb, for example, the horse is jumping.
- Use pictures and ask the child to construct sentences. Have a symbol to represent 'is' and ask the child to put it in the appropriate place.
- Use written sentences and cut them up and ask the child to reassemble them.

Past Tense

Some verbs have a regular 'ed' ending (e.g. chased, picked, brushed), but some verbs change completely when they have already happened (e.g. catch – caught, take – took, write – wrote). Many children will learn the 'ed' ending well and most will have some difficulty with the irregular forms at some point.

Regular Past Tense Verbs

Think of a selection of regular verbs to work on: For example: lived skated dropped brushed cleared opened played baked joined

- Use your selection of words to make sentences. For example: The girl is baking cakes. The girl baked cakes.
- Can the pupil say which sentence talks about something that has already happened?



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Collect pictures for your selected verbs. Ask the pupil to think of a sentence using the given past tense verbs.
- Using pictures as above and the written words, can the pupil match the picture to the word.

At this stage children need lots of opportunity to practise. You could use matching games, finding games, snap, etc. to provide this opportunity.

Irregular Past Tense Verbs

Carry out the activities as above but use a selection of irregular verbs from the list below:

built bit broke

hid ran wrote

went said caught

made ate drank

fell took lost

gave

Where possible link verb learning to physical activities. This may be particularly relevant in P.E. activities e.g. ran, caught, through etc

Future Tense

The future tense is used to indicate an event that is still to happen and is achieved by creating a verb phrase, for example:

- I will be
- I am going to

Activities for working on Future Tense

- Model sentences emphasising the auxiliary verb 'will', for example:
 - o I will hide
 - o She will ride
 - o They will play
 - o He will eat.
- Use pictures/symbols and ask the child to construct sentences. Have a symbol to represent 'will' and ask the child to put it in the appropriate place.
- Use pictures provided (Appendix A) and ask the child to match the sentences to the pictures.
- Use pictures on their own and ask the child to construct sentences using 'will'.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Ask the child to tell you something that 'will' happen in the future.
- Use written sentences and cut them up and ask the child to reassemble them.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Connectives

Conjunctions are linking words. They join two ideas or phrases together to form longer more complex sentences. This also helps to indicate to the listener the relationship between the ideas.

Activities to work on Conjunctions.

Joining phrases with 'and', 'but', 'because'

Use pictures, objects and symbols to support these activities

Working on 'And'

1. Break up the long sentences into two sentences. For example: The boy kicked the ball and the girl read a book.

The boy kicked the ball.

The girl read a book.

Sample Sentences:

- Mum made dinner and the children did their homework.
- Annie watched television and Ellie stroked the dog.
- George cleaned the car and Jack swept the floor.
- The children sang and the teacher played the piano.
- The cat slept and the kitten played.

2. Combine two sentences to make one sentence. Use the word 'and' to join them.

For example: The boy is drinking.

The girl is eating.

The boy is drinking and the girl is eating.

- Annie is seven years old. Ellie is eight years old.
- Rebecca is going to be a policewoman. Sarah is going to drive a fire-engine.
- The lion is sleeping. The elephant is awake.
- James is smiling. George is laughing.

3. Sometimes 'and' is used to reduce repetition.

For example: Ellie likes ponies. Sarah likes ponies.

Ellie and Sarah like ponies.

I am going to buy oranges. I am going to buy apples.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

I am going to buy apples and oranges.

Make one sentence using the word 'and':

4. Draw a picture in each box. Say the sentence out loud.

- I eat and
- I wear and
- I play with and
- You can throw and
- Jenny cleans and

Working on 'but'

1. Join the sentences using the word 'but'. For example: Ellie wants to colour. Her crayons need sharpening. Ellie wants to colour but her crayons need sharpening.

Sample sentences:

- George wants to play on the computer. He has to finish his homework.
- Annie likes chocolate. She doesn't like ice cream.
- The dog is allowed in the house. He isn't allowed on the sofa.
- James likes swimming. He doesn't go very often.

2. When the child is confident in combining phrases with 'and' or 'but' in isolation, present them with phrases where they have to choose 'and' or 'but' to join them.

Sample sentences:

- I want that £5 game.

I only have £3.

- My school plays netball.

We practice twice a week.

- I wanted a kitten.

My Mum said I couldn't.

- The playground was very icy.

Ellie fell over.

- George had an umbrella.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

He left it at home when it rained.

Working on 'because'

1. The word 'because' tells us why something happened. Join these sentences with 'because'. Annie is wearing a hat because James told a joke.

Sarah need a kitchen towel because she couldn't hear it.

Ellie turned up the television because she fell over.

George laughed because it is sunny outside.

Rebecca's knee hurt because she spilt her drink.

2. Think of reasons to say why something happened.

- Mum started dinner because
- The boys couldn't play football because
- She didn't like the jumper because
- The boys laughed because
- The girl opened the window because



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Comparatives

Comparatives are used to compare attributes of people and objects. These often give additional detail to the listener that may reduce the need for clarification. For example, 'Give me the biggest mug'. We indicate this usually by adding 'er' or 'est' to the adjective.

Activities

1. Have a selection of objects that vary in size. Ask a child to give you an object using:

- small, smaller, smallest;
- big, bigger, biggest;
- long, longer, longest.

2. The same activity can be carried out with pictures and also different types of attributes:

- loud, louder, loudest;
- bright, brighter, brightest;
- shiny, shinier, shiniest;
- dirty, dirtier, dirtiest;
- tidy, tidier, tidiest;
- easy, easier, easiest.

3. Ask the child to draw 3 pictures. One that is small, smaller and smallest. Other attributes can also be used.

4. When lining up for assembly, etc. ask the child to stand next to the....

- tallest boy;
- smallest girl;
- child with the longest hair.

5. In P.E. ask the children to:

- make the biggest circle they can;
- throw the smallest ring/bean bag.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that describe whether the person is of feminine (female) or masculine (male) nature. Pronouns give the ability to see the complex relationship between form, content and use. Pronouns can be subjective (he, she, they), objective (him, her, them) and possessive (his, her, their). The subjective pronouns are usually acquired before the objective pronouns and then followed by the possessive pronouns.

Activities

1. Using pictures or photograph action cards, the child has to describe what is happening in the pictures, for example:

- He is washing the car.
- She is eating dinner.
- They are playing games.
- She was smiling at him.
- The mother put her wellies on.
- They gave the cakes to them.
- It was his ball.
- That was her brush.
- It was their birthday party.

2. Using children in the group or boy and girl cut-out figures:

- The child has to describe something about the child sitting next to them, for example, 'He has blue eyes'; 'She has a dress'.
- Each child takes it in turn to mime a simple action and the child next to them has to describe it, for example, 'she is running'; 'He is driving'.
- Using a couple of cut out figures of a girl and a boy with clothing parts, give instructions, for example, put the coat on her; give him a hat.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Plurals

Plurals are words that make a noun become more than one. For example, instead of there being one book, there were two, so an 's' is included on the end of the word making it 'books'. Plurals refer to a group of objects and can be either regular or irregular. Children will generally develop understanding of the regular form first.

Activities

1. Using picture cards of objects where there is one object and more than one object, the child has to describe the pictures. For example, there is one pencil; there are two pencils. Play snap, pelmanism games or finding games.
2. Have some basic objects, for example, books, rubbers, pencils. Lay them out in front of the child. Ask them to label each group, for example, 'Here is one book'; 'There are two books'.
3. In the classroom give instructions to the child that illustrate that it is important to signal the difference between the singular and the plural. For example, 'Jack, please fetch the book' versus 'Jack, please fetch the books'.
4. Ask the child to draw two pictures. One that shows, for example, one cake and the other showing some cakes. Use the activities above to develop targeted irregular plurals. These could include, for example, children, geese, mice, feet, teeth, men.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Semantics

Vocabulary Learning

Learning vocabulary is a life long process. In early vocabulary, children use very concrete fixed terms and throughout development this knowledge can become more abstract, for example when a child first learns the word 'home' they understand it in relation to their own home, but later this understanding can develop to mean habitat.

When learning new words children may use different strategies. For some children, repeated use of the word in context may be beneficial. For other children, use of a picture or symbol may help learning of concrete vocabulary.

What is Semantics?

Semantics is the part of language concerned with the meaning of words and how they relate to each other. We organise words into networks according to their meanings, so when we hear one word, it triggers off lots of associations with other related words e.g. the word 'dog' will be linked with words like 'cat', 'pet', 'bone' etc. It will be part of the large network 'filed' away as 'animals' and also part of lots of smaller networks, e.g. 'pets', 'furry animals' etc.

This 'filing system' helps us to organise and store words effectively so that we retain the meanings of words and can access the right word easily when we want to say it. Children who have difficulty with the semantics part of language may find it hard to build links between words and store words within a network of other related words. Some children may have difficulty storing or effectively retrieving vocabulary. This can result in children searching for the target word or retrieving an inappropriate word. Children who have difficulty accessing their stored vocabulary often use 'empty, non specific terms such as' it', 'this', 'that', thingy'.

Difficulties learning vocabulary early in school life impacts on learning the more complex and abstract vocabulary later on. If children are not familiar with vocabulary it can lead to difficulties in understanding classroom language and so result in poor attention and increased distractibility.

The activities in this programme practise skills that will help your child to organise words according to their meanings more effectively. They will be most effective if they are carried out regularly for short periods of time e.g. 10- 15 minutes per day.

General Strategies for the Classroom

- Allow the child extra time to process vocabulary or to respond to questions requiring the use of new vocabulary.
- If a child is trying to retrieve a word, provide semantic clues, for example, an associated word or set phrase for the child to complete. 'Fish and
- Some children may benefit from sound clues, for example giving the child the first sound in the word.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- If the child cannot access the word, encourage them to talk about , explain or describe the word as this will help strengthen their semantic links and help cue the target word
- For children who have semantic difficulties, pre-teaching new topic vocabulary will help them access vocabulary

Working on grouping words/pictures/objects together and explaining why they are related.

Activities

- Use example of semantic dominoes and replace words with pictures from category word lists where possible. You can put two pictures together if they have something in common i.e. function, colour, shape, family, parts.

It may be useful to make a symbolised cue card (See Example) to remind your child of the different things they may have in common. Encourage your child to say why they have chosen to put two pictures together. Give clear models of this when it is your turn, e.g. 'I've put the trolley and the bike together because you can push them both'.

- Generate pictures from category word lists provided and select some from different categories (collect some more of your own too, e.g. from catalogues/magazines etc.)

At first present your child with four pictures of items within a category. Describe each one and talk about how each one is alike/different from the others. Talk about the general category label, e.g. animals. Then discuss how you could subdivide the category, e.g. into animals that can swim/animals with fur/animals that live in the zoo etc.

Do the same with a few different categories. Then present your child with two pictures from the same category and two from different categories. Ask your child to tell you the two that go together best and why.

When your child is confident at doing this using pictures, you can try doing the same activity but reading out words so that they to work the answer out without a visual cue, e.g. 'I'm going to give you four words, can you tell me the two that go together best? Drum, orange, recorder, grass'.

- Finding words that have similar meanings

For example:

fast humorous

small inquisitive

curious quick

funny little



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Ask the child to link the words with similar meanings and explain why.

- Odd one out tasks

Have some pictures, for example, a hat, gloves and cup, or spoken or written words, for example, tiger, cat, dog. Work from the large differences to the less obvious, for example, why a glove does not go with shoes and boots.

- Opposites

Pick an opposite pair and draw or list items in two sets, for example, hot and cold items.

- Finding words that sound the same

For example:

tea tee

write right

see sea

toe tow

Discuss the different meanings and spellings.

- Finding words with more than one meaning

For example:

box watch

glasses ring

Make up 2 sentences for each word.

Working on identifying the odd one out from a set of objects/ pictures/words and explaining why.

Activities

- Using pictures taken from category word lists put out three that go together and one that does not. Ask your child to identify the odd one out and explain why. Again it may be useful to use a cue card if it helps your child to decide why the item is the odd one out.

Start with large differences, e.g. three items of clothing and one food item. Then, progress to smaller differences, e.g. three items of summer clothing and one winter clothing.

Once your child can confidently do the above with pictures, try using written or spoken words.

Working on generating words within a category.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Activities

- Play games where you have to generate as many words as you can from a category in a minute. Work from broad to narrow categories, e.g. start with animals, and then move to animals with fur. If your child does not respond well to time pressure, set a target instead,

e.g. try to think of 10 words.

Start with concrete categories, e.g. animals, fruit, transport, furniture then move onto more abstract categories, e.g. things that are soft, yellow, sticky, round. Use a cue card to think of categories around size / shape / colour / function / parts etc.

- Make a category dice / spinner and a grid with different categories on. Your child has to generate as many words as possible within the category that the dice/spinner lands on.

Examples of Categories

Things with wings Things with wheels

Thing at the park Girls Names / Boys Names

Things with can Jump / Fly / Float Things made of Wood / Paper

Buildings

- Stick category labels onto a commercial game, e.g. Jenga. For each block they pull out / square they land on, your child has to generate items within the category
- Use Lollipops game provided. You don't have to use all the lollipops at once. The sheet of blank lollipops is provided so that you can introduce concepts related to topics that your child is learning about at the moment.

For example, for science/maths topics you could have 'things that are alive', 'things made of metal/wood' etc.

Working on generating a category label when given the names of items that go together.

Activities

- Show your child pictures of items within a category and then ask them to tell you the name of the 'family'. You can talk about the overall family name and also the sub groups within that, e.g. an apple is in the 'food' family but also the subgroup 'fruit'.

It may also help your child to understand this if you draw pictures to show how the 'family' is split into 'little families', e.g. food can be split into meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy foods etc.

- Take it in turns to pick cards with different items from the same category e.g. 'table, chair and lamp are all ...'. You have to generate the category label. Award points for correct answers. Use the ideas provided to start you off and try to think of some more ...



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Rehearsing new words

- Matching game: Children can play a pairs game (pelmanism) matching the word with its definition.
- Quiz: Children are given the definition and must generate the word or vice versa.
- *Silly/sensible:*

Children sort statements about the topic into silly or sensible categories e.g. all rocks float, etc.

- *Blockbuster game:*

Children must make their way across the board identifying the word from its initial sound and a definition.

- Hangman: Play as you would play hangman but use topic words.
- Un-jumble or finish incomplete sentences: Use sentences that include a definition of the topic word. With all of these activities, little and often with regular re-visiting is better than spending lots of time just once or twice on a specific area.

Working on developing word knowledge so stronger networks of information are stored around specific words.

Activities

- Keep a special 'word' book/file. When your child needs to learn a new item of vocabulary or is stuck on a word, help your child to draw a 'mind map' of everything they know about the word.

See the example mind map included for ideas (page 20). Refer to the semantics cue card for ideas of things to include in the mind map, e.g. Made of? Looks like? What is it similar to? What is it different from?

It may help your child if they draw pictures as well as writing things down in the mind map. Be creative. Encourage your child to refer back to the mind map if they are having difficulty retaining/accessing the word.

NB: This is an ongoing target that can be used for any vocabulary item, for as long as it is useful for your child. It may take a while to get into the habit of creating the mind maps but it should help your child to store words more effectively.

Sound Letter orientated games

- o Think of animals beginning with a given letter or sound.
- o Go through the alphabet naming an item for each letter, for example, ant, bear, cow, deer, etc.
- o Think of rhyming words, for example, cat, bat, mat. Talk about real words versus nonsense words, for example, cat, dat.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Categorising words depending on their number of syllables Put the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the corners of the room. Think of, for example, your name and go and stand by the number that depicts the number of syllables in your name. For example, 'Martin' would be the number 2.

Putting words into sentences

- Finishing incomplete sentences For example:

Thewent shopping.

The cat.....the tree.

The cat was.....the tree.

NB: Change grammatical category (i.e. adjective, auxiliary verb) and tenses.

- Changing a word in a sentence so the sentence still makes sense

For example:

The boy ran to the shops.

The boy walked to the shops.

- Making sentences around a word Move from nouns – verb – conjunctions (i.e. gets more difficult). For example: dog – painting – because.

- Reordering jumbled sentences For example, man ran the car the to.

- Identifying the wrong word in a sentence and correcting it These sentences should be spoken or written. For example: John is my sister. His name is Janet.

- Giving definitions of words For example, take turns to select a word and define it.

- Grouping or pairing words that go together and explaining why. Have pictures of items that go together, place them face down on the table and select two. If they go together explain why.

fish – chips

cup – saucer

key – lock

- Explaining differences between words For example:

big – long

cupboard – wardrobe

fridge – cooker

caravan – tent



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Describing a word meaning to someone else so they can guess the word
For example:

You can read it. It's made of paper. It's rectangular. It has writing in it. (Book).

- Read a paragraph, select vocabulary to discuss its meaning For example:

- o What does this word mean?

- o Find a word in the paragraph that means the opposite of....

Working on Generalisation

Activities

Make the Category Bingo game. Instructions for play are given on page 21.

- Word puzzles For example, crosswords, hangman, word searches.

- Generate as many words as possible in a category. In one minute name as many animals as you can. Work from broad to narrow categories, for example: animals _ zoo animals _ animals with fur

- o Games like:

“I am going on holiday and I am going to take...”

“My auntie went shopping and she got...”

- o Category dice:

Stick a category label on each face of the dice. Throw the dice.

Name an item in the category.

- Sorting words by categories

You will need a list of words to sort into given categories and post boxes with category labels on them. Post pictures/words in the appropriate box.

- Brainstorm for associated words

Think of words associated with, for example, ‘house’ or ‘feelings’. Some commercial games that you may find useful for work on semantics:

- ‘Don’t Panic’ – Children have to think of as many items within a category as they can before the timer runs out.

- ‘Guess What!’ – Players have to think of items within a category that start with a specific sound, e.g. animals beginning with ‘b’.

- ‘Taboo’ – Players have to describe something without saying the name of it.

Ideas to work on topic specific vocabulary



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Some children find it very difficult to learn and retain new vocabulary items, even though they may have an understanding of the concepts involved. They need many more exposures to new words than other children for them to form part of their useful vocabulary. Using the activities below will provide opportunities for the children to develop links and help them to learn and access new vocabulary items.

Learning new vocabulary

Before starting any new topic it helps if children can brainstorm all the words they already know about the subject. They can be helped with visual cues, for example, pictures or objects that relate to the topic. They can be helped to draw a 'topic web' or 'mind map', sorting the words into their categories.

As new words are encountered they can add them to their web in the appropriate place. Perhaps they can keep an individual web or they may like a class web placed where all the children will see it. This is also a useful strategy to show evidence of learning i.e. this is what we knew; this is what we know now.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Thinking Skills

The development of Language and Thinking skills will be affected by general developmental delay. Alternatively, children may have specific difficulties with the development of Language and/or Thinking skills as they are very closely connected in quite a complex way.

The ability to organise and classify and interpret information is a crucial underpinning to cross curriculum learning and becoming independent in daily living. The most effective way to teach thinking skills is functionally in real situations.

To understand a simple everyday scenario a child has to bring together a broad range of skills to interpret the context and language involved. These skills begin to develop at a very young age and progress from concrete ('here and now') to abstract ('how and why').

The most important way teachers can help children is by linking what they are teaching to what children already know and fostering an environment of enquiry.

Questioning, dialogue, story and play are all central to the process of assessing and developing the following thinking skills in young children.

Information Processing;

(What children already know that can help them.)

1. In foundation stage it is more appropriate to use real or toy objects in real or play situations e.g.
 - o Children helping to tidy up by putting things together in the appropriate places.
 - o Encouraging children to find the things they need to carry out an activity e.g. draw, paint, cut and stick, measure etc...
 - o Go on a walk to hunt for things with the same function
e.g. cleaning
cutting
things you can hear
2. Things that go together (using real objects or pictures).
3. Puzzles (fitting pieces together with the same colour, shape, pattern etc
4. Sorting by:
 - o basic category e.g. animals 'vs.' transport
 - o attribute (Colour/Size/shape)
 - o function (what we do with it)
 - o location e.g. Transport on road/in water/in sky
 - o Animals in farm or zoo



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

o Parts e.g. things with: wheels, wings, tails, handles etc

Comparison: (Closely linked with categorisation)

1. Differences: Identifying what is not the same about two objects or pictures.
2. Similarities: Identifying common attributes
3. Early Opposite concepts

Cross curricular concepts e.g. floating and sinking in science, comparing shapes in numeracy, comparing habitats in geography, similes and comparing texts in Literacy etc....

Verbal Reasoning:

1. Why / because scenarios
2. What's wrong? Identifying inappropriate features in pictures
3. Cause and effect/ Prediction 'What will happen next?', 'What might happen if....?'
4. Making choices (combining self awareness and knowledge of attributes of items)
5. Problem Solving 'what would you do if....?' Suggesting alternatives
6. Social problem solving (PSHE)
7. Assimilating Information: Following instructions which combine concepts together e.g. Point to the first black triangle in the row
8. Riddles. Combining/using information to make a logical guess
9. Temporal sequencing/Ordering events/Organising thoughts (see section on Narrative, Sequencing and Time concepts)



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Skills for Social Communication

Pupils need to be competent in a range of social communication skills to interact appropriately with one another and with adults. These skills include:

- Making and maintaining appropriate eye-contact;
- Listening to others; taking conversational turns;
- Talking with an appropriate rate and volume;
- Using and understanding gestures and facial expression; having an interest in what their conversation partner has to say;
- Initiating interaction
- Identifying emotions in others
- Proximity to conversational partner

Pupils will use these skills to perform a range of language 'functions' e.g. requesting, commenting, refusing and directing. At a higher level, pupils will use language to persuade, negotiate, agree, argue, inform etc.

Early Communication Skills

Pre verbal communication skills including joint attention and listening, eye contact, turn taking are necessary for language development and form the basic/essential part of effective social communication.

Children may require explicit modelling and teaching as to what constitutes appropriate looking, listening and turn taking skills. Many circle time activities encourage eye contact and turn taking, from passing a look or smile around the circle to games like those suggested below.

Eye Contact

Rules of good looking: - Facing the person - Looking at the person's face most of the time.

Games for eye contact and observation:

- Follow me - The adult performs an action e.g. finger on nose and the children have to copy that action. The teacher then changes the action and the children follow suit.
- Copy Cat – Two children play a game where one child carries out an action and the peer has to copy that action.
- Change one thing – The children are told to look carefully at the teacher and notice everything about what s/he looks like. They are then asked to shut their eyes and the teacher changes one aspect of their appearance e.g. rolls down a sock, takes off their watch. The children then open their eyes and identify what has changed.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Eye contact to indicate turns – The teacher explains that he or she will indicate whose turn it is to do something by looking at them, e.g. when it is time to find their coat, the teacher looks at a child and that child knows it's their turn to get their coat.
- One two three look – The children are seated in a circle with everyone looking down at the ground. The adult then says one, two three look and each child is to look at another group member. If they are looking at you, you can swap places with them.

Listening Skills

Rules of good listening - Eye Contact

- No fidgeting and good sitting.
- Think and talk about the same thing.

Games to encourage listening:

- Chinese whispers – The adult gives a message to one child in the group. The child whispers the message to the person next to them and so on down the line until the last person delivers the message back to the teacher. The class can then discuss what happened to the message for the listener and the speaker and its implications.
- Animal Noise – Go round the circle, everyone makes a noise but has to repeat what the others have done before they make their own. Encourage looking at the right child as they make each others noises.
- I went shopping – Each child begins by saying “I went shopping and I bought ...” They then repeat what the other children have said and adds one of their own. Alternatives to this games include “I went to the zoo and saw ...”, “I went on holiday and”
- Tell a story – In small groups, one person recounts an incident that has happened to them in real life. A second child listens and then retells the story as closely as they can to the original. The rest of the group listens to both and makes a judgement about how well the listeners retold the story and fills in the bits that were left out.

Turn Taking Skills

Rules for turn taking - Listen and show you are interested.

- Look at the other person.
- Wait for a pause.
- Take your turn.
- Don't carry on too long - turn taking should be fair.

Games for Turn taking

- Circle time – Each child is given a picture of an object or someone carrying out an action. They take it in turns to describe their picture or act it out.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Pass the object – select an object such as a bean bag, hat or soft toy which is given to someone to indicate that it is their turn during group activities such as circle time. A verbal game is played e.g. “my favourite colour is ...” or saying what they did at the weekend etc. The child with the object has his/her turn and then passes it on to the person and so on around the group.
- Build a story – This can be carried out in large or small groups. Each child is to make up a story. One member starts with an opening sentence e.g. “Sam and his family were going on holiday.....” and each person in turn adds his or own sentence until everyone has had a go.
- The microphone game – A microphone, or an object used to represent one, is used to indicate whose turn it is. Everyone is told that they can only speak when they are holding the microphone. Otherwise they have to listen. The verbal activity can be varied according to the age of the group e.g. “In the holiday I went to” Or more complex tasks such as story telling. The microphone is passed around the group until everyone has had a go.

Generalising Eye contact, Listening and Turn taking in the classroom

To help children transfer these skills to the classroom setting, they would benefit from verbal prompts and the use of visual cue symbols e.g. Board maker to remind them of the expected behaviours. Give positive praise and feedback for communication behaviours that the child is using e.g. “well done Toby, I knew you were listening as you were looking at me”.

Developing Conversational Skills

Your child may have a reduced awareness of the unspoken rules of conversation and would benefit from being explicitly taught the rules that most other people pick up intuitively. Examples include how to greet people, ways of handing over or ending conversation, or how to tell if the other person is interested. These need to be demonstrated, role-played and they need frequent encouragement to use the conventions in the natural situation.

Talking too much:

Remind your child of the conversation partner’s need to talk as well and the consequence if they do not e.g. they become bored. Frequently ask them how they think the partner feels and make them aware of the need to take turns.

Talking too much about their specific interests:

When your child talks too frequently about a specific topic, definite limits should be set on when the topic can or cannot be introduced into conversation. A clear signal, such as a picture cue, gesture or code word, may be used to remind the child.

Changing the topic of conversation:

When your child veers off the topic, gently refocus them and help them keep their language relevant to the conversation.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Giving irrelevant or insufficient information to the listener

Some children may expect the listener to know who or what they are talking about without giving the relevant information. In general conversation, clarify to the child where the breakdown has occurred and explain that more information is required for the listener to understand. You could play barrier games, whereby both the child and the adult have an identical set of equipment or pictures, and the child gives clear instructions to the listener as to what they need to do. Both the adult and the child act on these instructions and then compare the results. This is a good way of showing a child how conversation can breakdown.

Asking repetitive questions:

At times, your child may ask repetitive questions as a means to relieve anxiety. It may also be a feature of their rigidity in conversations, or an attempt to hold the floor. When your child asks frequent, irrelevant questions, it may be appropriate to explain to the child that that is not an appropriate topic but that it can be talked about later. It is important to explain why it is not appropriate.

Interrupting:

In group situations, try using an object such as a beanbag with only the person holding it being allowed to speak. You may need to explain to your child that pauses in conversations are the places to come in with their comments. Video clips are useful to practice recognising pauses. If they continue to have serious difficulty in recognising when and how to join in, devise a signal to be used by supportive adults or peers.

Try to remind your child of their need to wait with what they want to say while you are talking, finish your conversation as quickly as you can and then talk with them.

You can gradually extend the time you keep your child waiting but at first keep to a few seconds only. Give lots of praise when your child has succeeded in waiting and remembered their request.

Reduced eye contact:

Encourage looking at the speaker. Play games focusing on eye contact. Encourage the child to maintain a conversation by nodding, maintaining eye contact, pausing and using verbal fillers.

Emotional Awareness

Children need to become aware of a range of feelings. These range from more obvious feelings such as happy, sad and angry to more complex emotions such as cross, upset, sad or surprised. When working on understanding of emotions, it is important to begin with the child's current level of awareness. They may have a reduced awareness of their feelings. They may have an awareness of the obvious emotions of happy and sad, relating to them as good and bad feelings, but struggle to recognise less obvious emotions and often confuse them e.g. 'cross' may be



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

confused with 'upset', 'sad' and 'surprised'. It is not surprising that these children respond inappropriately to the emotional state of others when they lack clear awareness. It is only when they fully understand how others are feeling and can relate it to themselves that we can expect them to respond appropriately.

Activities to develop awareness of own or other's emotions:

- Introduce basic emotions of happy, sad and angry using photos of people displaying emotions e.g. cut out of magazines. Then present the child with pictures linked to the emotions of happy, sad and angry. Mix the situation pictures up and encourage the child to match the emotion cards with the situations. Situations could include:

Happy: A birthday, Getting a prize at school

Sad: His/her friends won't let him play with him/her, She fell off her bike and hurt herself

Angry: His sister broke his favourite toy, Someone scribbled on her picture at school

Later move to more complex emotions such as bored, scared, worried, disappointed and proud.

- Look at situations in magazine and discuss what's happening. Guess how the people could be feeling, saying etc.
- Watch a clip from a comedy programme e.g. 'my family'. In a group identify one of the emotions being expressed and brainstorm the different ways in which you know how the character is feeling. Draw the child's attention to the character's use of gesture, body language, facial expression and tone of voice.
- In a group, play charades. Write down on separate cards a range of emotions. Each child takes it in turn to pick up a card and act out an emotion and the other people take it in turns to act out the emotion.
- In groups you could talk about the different things that make us feel happy, sad, angry etc in order to emphasise the difference between people.
- Role-play everyday activities using a different emotion, for example, make a cup of tea in a happy way or dry dishes in a sad way. Think about body language and facial expression. Take turns at being the actor or the person who is guessing.
- Draw pictures of, for example, sad, happy or angry faces. Pay attention to the features that change (eyes, eyebrows, forehead, mouth and cheeks etc.) and talk about how they differ.
- Try making faces in a mirror with the child and talk about the way they look and the way it makes them feel.
- Brainstorm how other people feel as a consequence of children's actions. Try to reinforce the child's awareness of feelings when reading books, watching videos etc.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Understanding varying levels of emotion

Sometimes children have an awareness of extremes of feelings e.g. when you are very angry, sad etc., but are less aware when someone is feeling a little sad etc. or are building up to a strong emotion. The use of a picture of a balloon or a thermometer is a good way of showing varying strengths of feelings.

The 'balloon' is a useful tool to show strength of feelings to young children and the 'thermometer' for children nine years plus (see appendices 1 and 2). Both were chosen as they visually depict increasing strengths.

For example: Boiling thermometer/biggest balloon = feeling very very....

Cold thermometer/smallest balloon = feeling just a little bit...

These can be used when the child is experiencing the emotion. It is best to start with happy and sad and then move onto cross/angry, shocked/surprised, scared/frightened and bored/tired. There are many others to be introduced when the child's awareness has developed and as they experience them. The child could colour in the balloon/thermometer, choosing the colour they feel matches that emotion e.g. pink/red for angry.

The child could draw some things/situations in the balloon that represent that feeling for them e.g. doll/car = a little happy, my dog = very happy. You may need to suggest the things that you know make the child feel very different degrees of emotions.

The thermometer has clear grades for emotions that need to be written in as the child feels them.

The balloon/thermometer can then be used as permanent reference points for you and the child to refer to when experiencing the emotion. They need to be easily accessible, for example, kept by the teacher's desk or on the kitchen wall at home. Parents/teachers can use it to show how they/another child recognise and express their own feelings.

Understanding emotion conveyed by tone of voice

Some children cannot understand that how people say something is sometimes more important than what they have said. We understand sarcasm, irony, humour and teasing by doing this. When someone says 'I'm fine' we listen to how they say it rather than the words.

Some children may have difficulty understanding emotion from tone of voice, particularly when the tone of voice conflicts with the words used, for example, 'I'm happy' said in a sad way. Sarcasm and irony can be very difficult for your child to understand.

The child is likely to respond to the words used rather than the tone of voice, facial expression or body language. Do not expect the child to understand how you or others are feeling, tell them explicitly. Use thinking and speech bubbles to help them explain why people say one thing and mean another.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Ideas to help

Once the child has an understanding of his/her own and other's emotions, including more complex emotions, it may be appropriate to work on tone of voice. Hide your face so that the child does not get any clues from your facial expression or body language and then say neutral phrases using different tones of voice. For example say 'Tomorrow is Tuesday', 'He knocked on the door', 'The kitchen is over there' with a happy, sad or angry voice. Later try harder emotions such as scared, surprised, proud etc. If your child is finding this difficult, help them by letting them look at your facial expressions as well.

Once your child can recognise your tone of voice using a neutral phrase you can move on to the next stage where you use a happy, sad, etc. message, but use a tone of voice that does not match the message. For example, say happy sentences in a sad/angry way or 'angry' sentences in a sad/happy way. Some ideas follow. Say these sentences but hide your face so that your child cannot read your body language.

What is said (the words used) How the words are said e.g. in a happy, sad, angry way

I'm so happy that you won. Say in an angry or sad way.

I don't like it. Say in a happy way.

I'm so sad; I want to cry. Say in a happy way.

I'd really like that. Say in an angry or sad way.

You are so naughty. Say in a happy way.

It's such a beautiful day. Say in a sad or angry way.

It's so miserable. Say in a sad or angry way.

I'm going on holiday. Say in an angry or sad way.

I don't want to go shopping. Say in a happy or sad way.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

What is Dysfluency/ Stammering and when do I refer to Speech and Language therapy?

'Stammering' is the British term for dysfluency which persists and includes more of the following features: ('Stuttering' refers to the same condition but is the term more consistently used in America. However the term stuttering is also commonly used in the U.K.)

Dysfluency in speech is very common at a stage when a child is going through a phase of rapid expansion of speech and language skills. This is commonly between the ages of two and five years but can be later and more extended in a child who has delayed development in Speech and Language or is more generally developmentally delayed.

The following are examples of 'normal' dysfluencies:

Revisions: Starting a sentence, stopping, and changing the wording. (e.g. I saw some - I went to the zoo)

Hesitations and Interjections: Silences or Words generally used to fill thinking time e.g. 'um' 'er' 'like' 'kind of '

Phrase repetitions: 'I think, I think..' and then, and then'

Word repetitions: Particularly at the beginnings of utterances e.g. I, I, I can't find it.

There is no exact point at which normal dysfluency becomes stammering but the following features enable us to see which children to be more concerned about.

Stammering is not predictable, the severity and type can vary from day to day. A stammer is characterised by one or more of the following features:

Some children may also develop other features associated with struggling to say what they want with ease.

For instance:

Changing words

Some people are very clever and develop a huge dictionary of words inside their head so that when a problem word comes up, they can find an alternative that's not so hard to say. Perhaps starts with an easier sound.

Avoiding certain speaking situations. (Maybe getting someone else to do the talking).

Pretending you haven't heard or don't know the answer.

Breaking eye contact with the person who is listening.

Facial or body tension e.g. blinking, tapping with your hand or foot .Nodding your head or moving your body.

Taking a deep breath before talking, running out of breath, gasping or talking on an inward breath.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Adding in extra sounds or words to help you get started E.g. Er...Well..... Actually... Kind of... Y'know.....

Therapists refer to some of these as 'tricks'. They may have helped to start with, but aren't working any longer. They are often hard work and when they don't work, they don't help. In fact sometimes they make communicating even harder. It is therefore important to try to help them be replaced with helpful strategies.

What causes stammering?

Stammering is considered to be a complex speech disorder not caused by a single factor but rather by a combination of physiological, linguistic, environmental and psychological factors. It is therefore best described as 'multi-factorial'. There is no one cause and no 'cure' as such.

Stammering can be exacerbated by:

Tiredness

Heightened emotions

When the demands of a situation outweigh the child's ability and or confidence in handling it e.g. Communicating in larger groups, communicating less familiar information.

Complexity of language/vocabulary

Unexpected events

Time pressure/competitive situations

Rapid speech models

Time pressure and interruptions

Loss of listener attention

Sensitivity and or high, self-imposed expectations

Pressure from others to speak

What risk factors should I consider?

- If there is anyone else in the child's extended family who used to or continues to stammer the child may have inherited a predisposition to stammer but he/she may also have inherited the likelihood of overcoming the problem.
- If the family member is still stammering it is less likely that the child's problem will resolve.
- If the problem has persisted for more than a year it is less likely to resolve on its own.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

- Stammering may be a feature of a wider communication difficulty. If the child has any past or ongoing features of Speech or Language delay or disorder he/she is more vulnerable to stammering. It is important to discuss your observations with parents as soon as possible as some children have much more struggle in school than when in a family environment.

Research has proved that early intervention can be very effective so early referral is VERY IMPORTANT particularly if children fit the above risk factors.

How Will Speech and Language Therapy Help?

Although there is no recognised cure for stammering Speech and Language Therapy has an important role to play in helping children, families, friends and teachers to:

- Understand what is happening in their speech and reduce anxiety.
- Know that that it is not their fault and other children and adults experience the same difficulty.
- Acknowledge any feelings that are associated with the stammer e.g. embarrassment, frustration.
- Find solutions to any problems that may be associated with the stammer. (e.g. teasing/bullying)
- Learn strategies and techniques which often help to reduce the occurrence of stammering. (e.g. slowing rate and pausing more, reducing tension particularly in the speech articulators when beginning an utterance.
- develop confidence in being good at communicating messages and
- reducing the tendency to avoid speaking.

How can I help?

It is important that everybody understands that:

- Stammering can come and go often unpredictably
- It is likely that a child will be fluent at certain times but it is often not within their control in other situations
- Stammering is not purely about being nervous and should never be considered as attention seeking behaviour.
- Many situations at school pose considerable challenges to children who stammer.

These are:

Answering the register.

Answering and asking questions

Reading aloud

Joining in a group discussion



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Explaining a complex idea or series of events

Saying multi-syllabic words or words which begin with a certain sound.

Responding to teasing

After discussing your observations with parents consider the following simple ways that they and teaching staff can work together to reduce communicative pressure and use responses which enhance the child's confidence.

_ Slow down your own rate of speech as this helps the child to feel less rushed.

_ Keep your language as clear and simple as possible

_ Model thinking time (e.g. "Let me think about that") Also model that it is o.k. to make mistakes. We all make mistakes when we are learning new or harder things. This happens in talking just like other all things we do.

_ Allow the child to get the message completed. Do not be tempted to finish for them. Reflect what you have heard without interrupting. This helps to make it clear that what the child is saying is much more important than how and that his/her ideas are important and valued.

_ Help build the child's confidence by recognising strengths and successes in general as well as in communication.

_ Try not to ask too many questions. Use closed questions more than open ones and Give alternatives to help e.g. 'will it float or sink?' rather than 'what will happen?' Making comments is also less demanding e.g. 'I wonder what will happen'.

_ If the child is having an episode of speaking more fluently use this time to nurture developing their confidence by involving them more in new talking situations. Use more dysfluent patches to consolidate current achievements so involving them in talking situations that are less challenging e.g. talking about a personal interest, using visual aids to demonstrate their learning and support their speaking. Other speaking situations which help fluency are reciting familiar lists like days of the week or counting, singing, reciting rhymes or poetry, speaking with actions or speaking in unison with others.

_ When the child is clearly aware of and embarrassed by their struggle it is helpful to acknowledge this and reassure them. **Do not give advice.** Suggestions such as 'slow down', 'take a deep breath' 'start again' or 'think about what you are going to say' may seem helpful but can be more disruptive.

_ You can provide opportunities for private discussions about speech and what the child finds hard. These can be matter of fact exchanges about classroom situations. This will help you how aware and anxious the child might be and if they have any personal goals or wishes.

_ When a child is learning to read we must be careful not to push the child on too fast if they become dysfluent when reading. Allow them plenty of time to practice 1:1 and try reading slowly in unison for some of the time.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

_ Reading aloud can increase anxiety about stuttering if the child has to wait his turn. You could ask the child if they would like to go first or be randomly chosen or to read in unison with a partner.

_ When possible pair the child with 'easy-going/patient partners who are likely to allow him to contribute easily.

_ Teasing can be a part of everyday life for children at times for one reason or another. Teachers are very powerful in creating an environment of acceptance of differences. When teasing continues to occur it is important to encourage the child to tell someone. Therapists and teachers can also help children develop ways of solving problems and find ways to effectively handle teasing themselves.

_ Perhaps the most important thing is that the child does not come to believe that 'stammering is unspeakably bad. Careful sensitive discussion of the child's difficulties and strengths can do much to reduce the need to hide stammering and paradoxically this can lead to increased fluency. The harder the child tries to prevent stammering the worse it becomes. There is a delicate balance between avoiding the possible embarrassment of stammering and encouraging taking risks with different speaking situations. If in doubt the child and his/her therapist should always be consulted.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Children with Speech Sound Difficulties

How can you support in school

- Focus on the child's listening and awareness of speech sounds (see below)
- Use Jolly Phonics symbols and gestures. Encourage the child to look at your face
- Routinely model correct sounds by repeating the child's words correctly but uncritically
- Unless the child can easily copy your model of a sound or word, avoid direct speech production work. Be aware that even when the child can repeat a sound or word correctly there is a long way to go before the sound can be used in everyday speech. This is not 'laziness' or 'habit' but part of the child's speech development.

All the sound awareness work that you are doing in literacy will also support clear speech. Many of the elements in the *Letters & Sounds Programme* are exactly what these children need to support their speech development. They will benefit from repeated exposure to the activities in a small group context.

Letters & Sounds Programme - Activities to support speech:

Phase 1: General Sound Discrimination – instrumental sounds

Rhythm & Rhyme

Alliteration

Voice Sounds

Oral blending and segmenting – modeling

Phase 2: Sound & letter matching (Jolly Phonics)

Remember the emphasis is on developing listening to, and identification of, sounds and sound patterns. The adult's key role is to provide models. Do not worry if the child's own speech is not accurate.

Supporting a child with unclear speech in Reception Class

A Book about Me

The child may find it very difficult to tell you clearly about their important people, places and interests. Work with parents to put together ***A Book About Me*** to be kept in the classroom for quick reference. The book should consist mostly of photos with a little writing (which will also support literacy). Use a small exercise book or 'peel-back' photo album. The book could contain labelled photos of: Family members / Friends, Pets, Home/bedroom, Favourite places, Favourite activities & toys, e.g. football, playground etc., and anything else special to the child that they would like to share.



Talk About Town: Speech and Language Therapy Resources

Encourage the child to share the book with the teacher and other adults and children. Have it available to refer to in case of a breakdown in communication. We also know that the more you listen to a child with unclear speech speak, the easier you will find it to 'tune in', to their speech patterns

General Classroom Strategies To Help Children With Speech And Language Difficulties

- Make sure the child is looking at you and that you have his/her attention before giving an instruction.
- Keep the command short and simple. Take care not to overload the child's auditory memory capacity. Break up a complex instruction into several commands.
- Make sure the instructions uses vocabulary that the child knows
- Keep your utterances to the 'here and now' and use more concrete language rather than terms such as 'if' and 'when' etc.
- Be aware that things may not be done in the correct sequence, keep abstract sequencing terms to a minimum.
- Use as much gesture and tone of voice as possible to add cues and clues to what you want.
- Set the child in a suitable position in the classroom, ie. at the front so that you can see what he/she is doing and he/she can follow your lead but slightly to the side so he can follow the other children as well.
- Build up his/her confidence. This can be very difficult if he/she is not good at anything but try to make communicating pleasurable.
- Remember it is not the child's fault that he/she cannot return the information.
- Children with speech and language difficulties often have problems organising themselves and their belongings. Be sensitive to this and allow time for clearing away, writing down homework, packing belongings etc.
- Use practical experience to support the spoken word as often as possible.