

Parent Guide



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We are excited to share this content with you. If you are interested in finding more resources made especially for Parents, then check out these links to different areas of the **Twinkl Parents** hub.

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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Part of a detailed series of resources on 'Supporting Your Child's Learning in Reception', this parent guide gives you an overview of the early learning goals, information on how your child may be taught communication and language at school and practical, fun ideas for how you can support them with their early communication skills at home.

What is the focus of this resource?

EYFS Framework

Supporting Your Child

Reception

Communication and Language

Further Ideas and Suggestions

Try some of our [Top Tips for Practising Communication Skills \(Ages 4 - 5\)](#) to really boost your child's listening, attention, understanding and speaking skills or keep things playful with games like this [Fantasy Story Time Flashcards Activity](#).

Parents Blog



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Communication and Language

What is communication and language?

Communication and language has two aspects – 'listening, attention and understanding' and 'speaking'. It seems obvious but these skills are so important and the best way you can encourage your child here is to spend time talking to them and listening to them. More often than not, when a child struggles in their first year at school, it is partly or wholly because they struggle to listen to, understand or express language.

In early years, communication and language is one of the prime areas of learning and there are two aspects within it:

Listening, Attention and Understanding

Speaking

The following pages contain more information on each early learning goal and how you can support your child to meet this end of year expectation at home. Visit these areas on the Parents Hub for amazing resources to help you make learning at home fun!

Listening and Attention

Understanding

Speaking

How will my child be taught communication and language in school?

Every school is different so it's best to talk to your child's teacher or look on their website for more information. Communication and language skills are taught all the time through daily interactions, routines and expectations, as well as through all the play your child will be enjoying. Your child may take part in circle times about how to be a good listener or good friend, which can help explicitly teach them good habits for communication. They will also be encouraged to listen carefully in lessons such as phonics, where careful listening skills are crucial.

Your child will (hopefully) read and be read to a lot in reception. This boosts all their communication skills, from listening to the story and paying attention to what is happening, to understanding the story, making links with others and explaining what they think might happen next. It can also help improve their vocabulary. Of course, vocabulary is further strengthened if your child gets a chance to use it in their own play - perhaps through role play.

Listening, Attention and Understanding

Please remember, the early learning goals are the expectation for the end of reception. Your child will be working towards these throughout the year and gradually building on their skills. They don't have to be able to do everything all at once!

Early Learning Goal

Children at the expected level of development will:

- listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.
- make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.
- hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

How can I support my child at home?

- Share rhymes, songs, books and stories. Talk about what is happening in the stories or rhymes. With a familiar rhyme or book, stop and ask your child to continue, or accidentally get the words 'wrong' – children love to correct you!
- Play games which require listening skills. Examples include 'Simon Says...', 'I Spy', 'I Went to Market...' or saying 'Ready, steady, go!' before starting a race or another activity.
- Listen for sounds. When you're out and about, stop and listen with your child. What can they hear? Maybe birdsong, the sound of traffic, music or people talking.
- Rhyme with your child. Help your child to hear and recognise rhyming words – an essential step in reading as well. When you hear a word, say lots of rhymes for it. For example, 'Look at that dog! It's a frog, log, hog dog!' See if your child can create rhymes in a similar way.
- Listen when your child speaks to you. Show them how to be a good listener in the way that you respond to them when they talk to you.
- Use an egg timer. If your child struggles to stay focused, use an egg timer or stopwatch to gradually increase the amount of time they spend on a task. Praise and reward them for spending a good amount of time on a task.
- Play an echo game. Make a sound and ask your child to repeat it back to you. Change the sound. Ask your child to make a sound for you. You can make the sound using your voice, your body or by tapping on an instrument such as a toy drum.
- Talk, talk, talk with your child – as much as you possibly can. Talk to them about their play, about what is going on around them and about stories that you share.
- Ask your child to explain events or decisions they have made, e.g. 'So this is a model of a robot. What does this button do?'
- Make a record. When you have a holiday, a day out or a trip somewhere, help your child with creating a montage or scrapbook of objects, artefacts and mementos which you can talk about later.

Listening, Attention and Understanding

How can I support my child at home?

- Plan and discuss. When starting something new, such as getting out the paints to make a picture or going on a trip to the supermarket, help your child to talk about the steps that you will need to take and the order they will come in.
- Use picture clues. If your child struggles to follow instructions, use picture clues or cards (try our **Now and Next Themed Visual Aids** for home). Support your child to start understanding two-step instructions, such as 'Put your shoes away and then wash your hands.' Be aware that children are very good at picking up cues from what they see rather than what they hear so will often copy another child or adult or take their cues from gestures.
- Play 'pretend' games. Get involved in your child's imaginary play and encourage your child to talk about what is happening in their imaginary world. You can do this simply by playing shops, dressing up, or playing alongside your child as he or she builds a model or constructs a train track.

If You Have Concerns...

If you have any concerns about your child's hearing, attention or speech and language development, speak to their class teacher, who may decide to make a referral to specialist speech and language experts. Children can have difficulties with expressive speech (how they speak themselves), receptive speech (what they understand) or both. Expressive speech difficulties can be as simple as mispronunciation of certain sounds and can be remedied with a set of simple exercises. Receptive speech difficulties may require more work with your child on their understanding. Expert speech therapists will be able to offer support if this is needed.

Speaking

Early Learning Goal

Children at the expected level of development will:

- be confident to try new activities and show independence, resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge.
- explain the reasons for rules, know right from wrong and try to behave accordingly.
- manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs, including dressing, going to the toilet and understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

The most important thing you can do is make time to listen to your child. Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones and really listen to them!

Disclaimer: We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.

How can I support my child at home?

- Talk, talk, talk with your child - as much as you possibly can. Studies show that children from families where talk features regularly, read earlier and have better attainment in school overall.
- Don't over-correct. If your child gets a word wrong, or has a problem with certain sounds, don't tell them they are wrong. Instead, repeat their sentence back to them correctly. e.g. if your child says 'Daddy goed to the shops', you can say, 'Yes, that's right. Daddy went to the shops.'
- Show your child how to hold a conversation. Demonstrate this in your own talk, either with your child or with other family members or friends. Show good listening skills such as turn taking, making eye contact, and responding to what a person has said.
- Sit down as a family and eat a meal every day – without the TV or other devices. Studies show that families that regularly sit down together over a meal communicate better and have better long-term mental and emotional health. Mealtime is a great time to talk about the day, find out if there are any problems and encourage your child to talk and listen.
- Talk about your child's interests. If your daughter loves painting, talk about why this is and what she's doing. Introduce great vocabulary such as colour names, words for pieces of equipment or techniques such as dabbing, stippling, printing. If your son loves to be outside, talk about what he can see, hear and feel. Again, introduce and model using words to increase vocabulary, e.g. 'The wind feels chilly against my skin' or 'Can you hear the birds twittering?'
- Don't be afraid to use 'big words'. Children love new vocabulary. A great game to play is 'Not just... but...' For example, 'My dinner was not just delicious... it was delectable!' or 'Daddy Bear was not just cross... he was furious!'
- Limit screen time. Whilst many children's TV programmes, apps and games have value in teaching new words and ideas, they often encourage children to be passive learners rather than actively engaging with the world around them. Make sure that you also switch off your devices when you are devoting time to talking with your child.
- Re-enact or retell familiar stories. For example, you could find three bowls, three spoons and three teddies and help your child to retell the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Show your child how we can use words like 'first', 'then', 'next', 'now' and 'after that' to show the order of events in a story.
- Develop early reading skills. When you've shared a story, talk about the characters. Who was good? Who was bad? What normally happens to the goodies and the baddies in stories?
- Ask your child to explain events in stories, e.g. 'Why was Jack's mum cross when he sold the cow for a handful of beans?'
- Look at the world around you. Develop early understanding of the world by asking your child to make predictions. ('What will happen if we plant a seed and water it?'), explain events ('Why did the boat sink in the bath?'), see patterns ('What happens to the ball when we put it on a slope?') and speculate ('What if your tower falls down?').