

Early language development

There are lots of ways we can support children's early language development. The best way to develop language is through your everyday interactions and play. Don't worry about how clear your child's speech is at this stage. They may use a limited range of speech sounds or may miss off the ends of words. Focus on showing your child how to say the words and just repeat them back how they should sound.

Strategies for early language development:

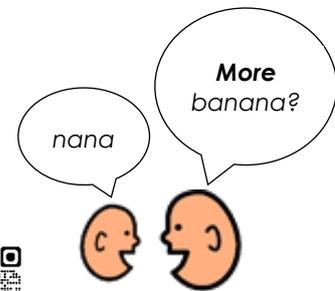
- **Simple language.** Try to match your own language to your child's level, plus one or two words. Model language using simple words and phrases and make short, simple comments.



Try to use more comments than questions. Instead of asking your child, 'What's that?', name or label the word. You don't need to ask them to say the word after you.

- **Copy and add.** If your child says a word, repeat it back and add a word to extend it.

e.g. Child: 'Car.'
Adult: 'Yes, blue car.' or 'Daddy's car'.



- **Repeat.** Children need to hear words used many times to understand and use them. Repeat words often and in different contexts.



- **Offer choices.** Try to offer a choice of two options (e.g. 'Milk or water?'), rather than asking an open or yes/no question (e.g. 'What do you want?', 'Do you want a drink?'). This creates an opportunity for your child to communicate and is a way for you to model words for them to hear.

Your child may communicate their choice by reaching or pointing. They may make a sound or try to copy the word. Accept all of these and repeat the word again to emphasise it. You can offer choices when you play together and during your everyday routines.

e.g. 'Car or ball?'
'Apple or banana?'



- **Pause and wait.** Your child may need extra time to decide what they are going to do or say. Slow down your own talking and give your child plenty of thinking time. Leave pauses for your child to take a turn. Watch and listen carefully, and respond when your child tries to communicate.



See [BBC's Tiny Happy People](#) to find out more about supporting children's early language development.

