



# How to Best Promote your Child's Language

By Delaney Sadler, OSCAR Care Group Speech Pathologist

Language is the primary communication method for most people and involves using words to exchange a message. Language allows us to express our thoughts and ideas verbally or non-verbally (e.g. in writing) and understand those of others.

Language is complex and children start learning it from the moment they are born. It is important to note that talking doesn't just happen.

There are skills that your child must first develop as a **foundation for their language skills**. These include:

- Initiating and maintaining eye contact
- Taking turns in play or with sounds (e.g. child has a sip of tea and then waits for mum to, then repeat)
- Looking at you
- Looking at things in their environment
- Pointing
- Functional play, playing with toys or objects according to their intended function e.g. throwing a ball
- Pretend play, playing with toys/objects or with others in a pretend way e.g. tea party
- Symbolic play, playing with a toy/object in a way that it was not intended e.g. using a banana as a telephone



How can you help your child develop their foundation skills?

- Play with your child
- Get face to face
- Imitate the sounds they make and the actions they do in play
- Wait for your child to take a turn in play
- Use lots of fun sounds and words in play (e.g. woah, pop, argh, bang)

Once your child has developed these skills, they then begin to start **understanding language**. At this point your child will start to be able to follow directions (e.g. give teddy), understand some words you say to them (e.g. doggy, mummy, cup) and understand basic questions (e.g. where's daddy?).

## How can you help develop your child's understanding of language?

- Allow pauses when you're talking for them to understand what you're saying
- Comment on what your child is doing
- Put into words the message your child is trying to say
- Use routines to introduce new words
- Use visuals, gestures or basic signs to give your child extra information



Once your child has the foundation skills and has started to understand language, they can begin to **express themselves through language**. This language may be verbally through speech or through signing.

- How can you help your child express themselves through language?
- Wait and give your child the opportunity to respond to you
- Provide more words to help your child expand on what they're saying (e.g. child: car, adult: fast car)
- Never correct your child if they pronounce something wrong (pronunciation comes later)
- Try to limit the number of questions you ask
- Read books with your child

For more information visit: [Speech Pathology Australia](https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.com.au)



### Does a child in your care have Communication or Swallowing difficulties?

This article was written by OSCAR Care Group Speech Pathologist, Delaney Sadler. Please call or email us via our contact details below with any questions.



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