

Supporting Your 3 - 4 Year Old Child in

Communication and Language

Parent Advice Booklet

What Is This Guide?

What do we mean by communication and language? In the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (known as EYFS), there are some expectations laid out for how children generally develop in the ways they communicate. This guide can help you understand what that development might look like for your child and how you can help support their learning at home.

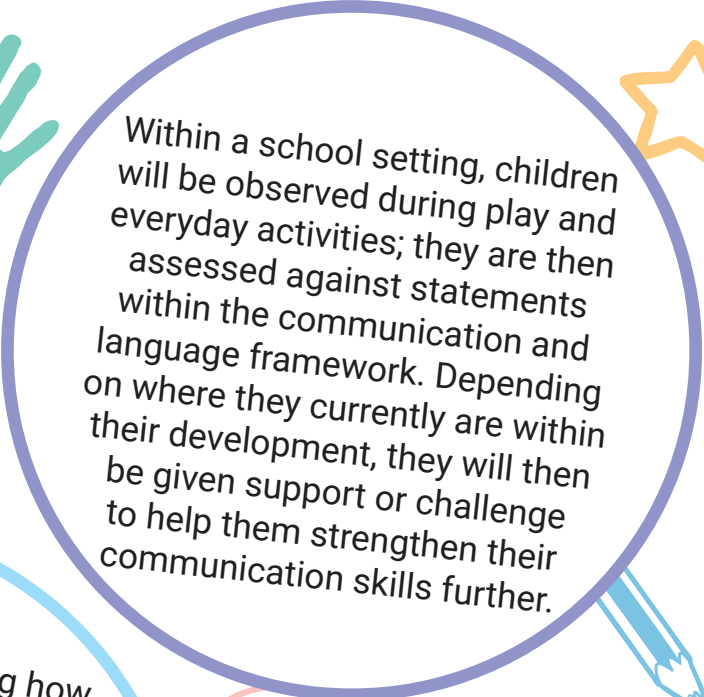
This guide breaks down the EYFS framework into simple sections and statements, providing you with explanations of what communication and language might look like for your child at this stage of their learning. Each area has ideas for supporting your child with fun and engaging activities, whether your child is beginning to communicate with a wider range of vocabulary or they are new to the English language.

Rather than a list of must-do activities, you can dip in and out of these prompts and ideas based on your child's current interests and appropriate stage of development.

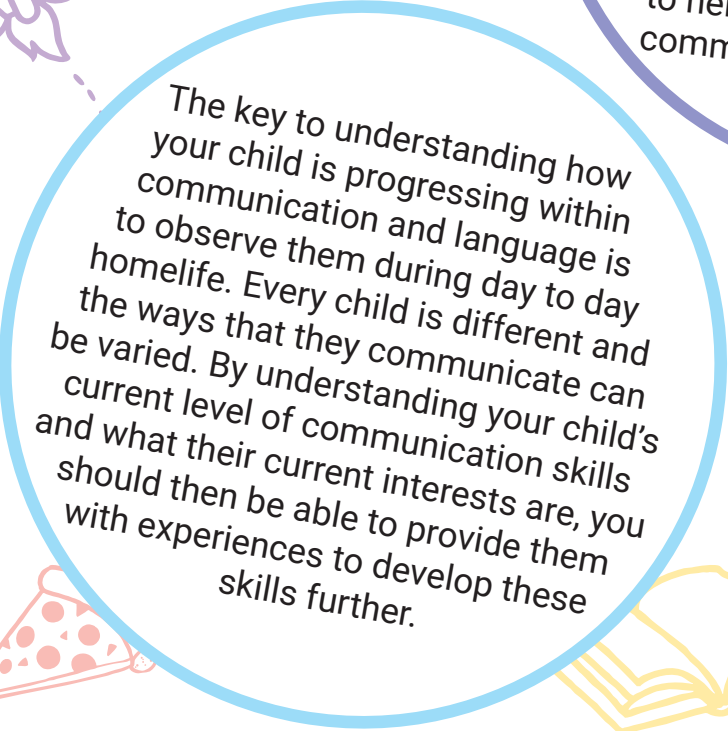
You can visit the **parent section** of the Twinkl site for even more resources to support your child in communication and language, as well as all other areas of learning. Either search for keywords used in this guide or explore more in the early years section.



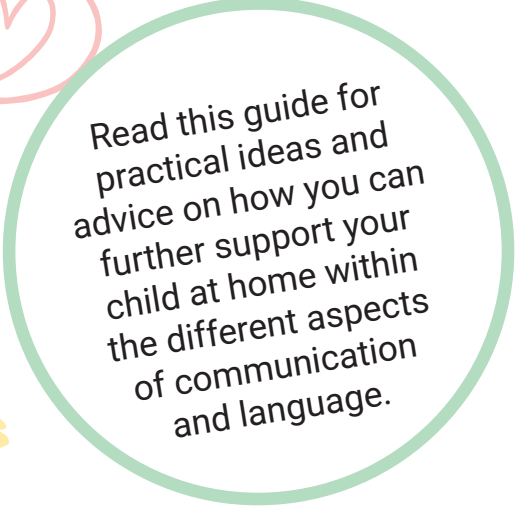
In the early years framework, communication and language is split into three aspects: **listening and attention**, **understanding** and **speaking**.



Within a school setting, children will be observed during play and everyday activities; they are then assessed against statements within the communication and language framework. Depending on where they currently are within their development, they will then be given support or challenge to help them strengthen their communication skills further.



The key to understanding how your child is progressing within communication and language is to observe them during day to day homelife. Every child is different and the ways that they communicate can be varied. By understanding your child's current level of communication skills and what their current interests are, you should then be able to provide them with experiences to develop these skills further.



Read this guide for practical ideas and advice on how you can further support your child at home within the different aspects of communication and language.

Listening and Attention

Through listening to others and paying attention to facial expressions and body language, children begin to learn how to be effective communicators. Singing songs, listening to stories, following instructions and joining in with conversations are all ways that children can further develop their listening skills and begin to show increased attention and interest.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...

To support this, you could...

listening to others one-to-one or in small groups, when conversation interests them.

engage your child in one-to-one or small group conversations, encouraging them to join in by listening and responding.

listening to stories with increasing attention and recall.

regularly have story times each day to encourage a love of stories and books.

joining in with repeated refrains and anticipating key events and phrases in rhymes and stories.

play nursery rhymes and songs, which have repeated phrases in them for your child to join in with.

focusing their attention, e.g. they can still listen or do, but can shift own attention.

say your child's name before speaking to them when they are engaged in an activity so they know to respond.

being able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).

Give your child some simple instructions to follow, e.g. 'Hang your coat up then put your wellies in the box please.'

Listening and Attention

How is your little one progressing with their listening and attention?



Good Listening Ears

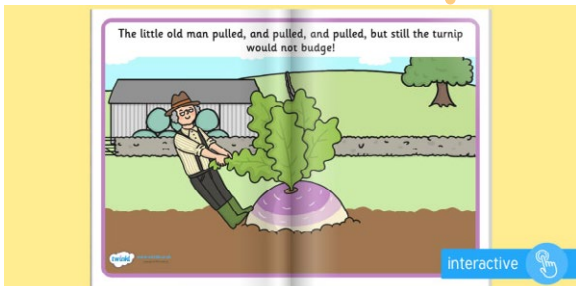
Stories with repeated refrains will help your child become more familiar with story structure and typical story language, e.g. when the Big Bad Wolf huffs and puffs or when Goldilocks tries out something big, medium and small.



What Makes that Sound? PowerPoint

Songs and games that require actions are a great way to practise listening skills. Can your child match their movements to Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes or join in with a game of Simon Says?

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



The Enormous Turnip eBook

Understanding

At this stage of their development, a child's understanding will most likely far outweigh their speaking skills; however, through personal experiences and modelled language from adults, your child's speech should begin to match their level of understanding.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...

To support this, you could...

understanding the use of objects, e.g. 'What do we use to cut paper?'

frequently explain what you are doing and why so that your child has a clearer understanding of why we do things, e.g. 'I'm going to wash the grapes so that they are nice and clean.'

showing an understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top' and 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting the correct picture.

play some active games involving prepositional actions in which your child will need to follow simple instructions such as crawling 'through' the tunnel or standing 'on top of' the bench.

responding to simple instructions, e.g. to get or put away an object.

encourage your child to be more independent by giving them simple instructions to follow during home routines.

understanding 'why' and 'how' questions.

ask your child why and how questions during story time to check their understanding of storyline and characters.

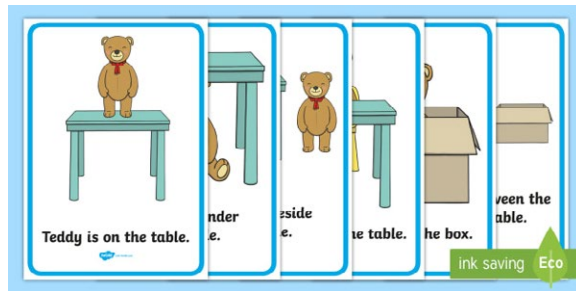
Understanding

How is your little one progressing with their understanding?

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During story times, ask your child a variety of who, when, why and how questions to encourage good thinking and to check their understanding of the storyline and characters, e.g. 'what do you think might happen next?' or 'why do you think the character feels sad?'



Preposition Teddy Cards



Ensure that you are speaking clearly during conversations and allowing your child lots of thinking time before expecting a response.



Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?

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Speaking

Many children learn about speech through listening to how others speak and structure conversations. You may have noticed your child repeating a phrase that you often say or copying the way you pronounce something. Speaking to your child clearly and calmly, using age-appropriate language and introducing new concepts and vocabulary are all ways you can extend your child's communication skills.

At 3 - 4 years old, your child may be working towards...

To support this, you could...

using more complex sentences to link thoughts, e.g. using and, because.

model great speaking by using full sentences in front of your child filled with rich vocabulary and a variety of connectives.

retelling a simple past event in the correct order, e.g. I went down a slide, I hurt my finger.

regularly ask your child what they are doing or what they did so they become more confident at retelling events in the correct order.

using talk to connect ideas, explaining what is happening and anticipating what might happen next. They can also recall and relive past experiences.

encourage your child to talk about their experiences, ideas and thoughts, allowing them to make connections between experiences and language.

questioning why things happen and can give explanations, e.g. asking: who, what, when, how.

encourage your child to ask lots of questions by taking the time to listen carefully and answer any questions they may have.

using a range of tenses, e.g. play, playing, will play, played.

Add words to what your child says, e.g. 'I go to party.' 'Yes you went to the party.' To help them become more secure in their tenses.

using intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make the meaning clear to others.	use different voices for the character voices within stories to add humour or convey emotions.
using vocabulary focused on objects and people that are of particular importance to them.	display photos of loved ones to encourage your child to talk about them and past experiences.
building up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences.	introduce new vocabulary through new experiences and activities.
using talk in pretending that objects stand for something else in play, e.g. 'This box is my castle.'	play with your child in role, encouraging using imagination to pretend objects are different things.



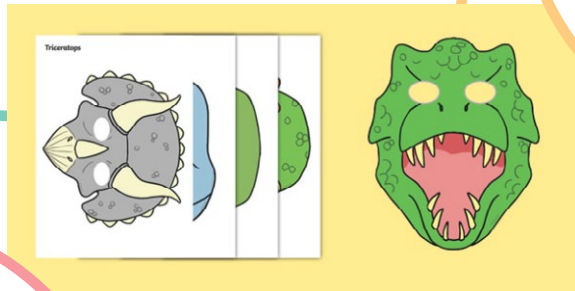
Speaking

How is your little one progressing with their speaking?



Astronaut and Alien Role-Play Masks

Role play encourages your child to use the language they've learnt in real-life experiences; why not create a box filled with props or objects that your child could use to enhance their pretend play, e.g. binoculars, telephones, keypads, pots, pans or cups?



Dinosaur Masks

Fill a small bag or pillowcase with a handful of everyday objects and materials, e.g. a feather, bubblewrap, a marble, tinfoil or small toys. Can your child describe what they feel? Ask questions to introduce new vocabulary, such as 'does it feel cold/smooth/hard/prickly?'

Have any moments stood out to you as a special memory?



Storytelling Stick Puppets

Support and Challenge

After reading this guide and trying out some of the activities with your child, you may find that they require more support with some activities than others. This is perfectly OK; some concepts are more difficult than others and with more practice, your child should begin to make more progress. On the other hand, if your child is able to do most of these activities easily, then perhaps they need a challenge?

A Parent Guide to Communication and Language for Ages 2 - 3 may be more suitable for your child if they aren't quite ready for some of the activities in this guide. Why not take a step back and try some of the ideas listed in there first and develop their self-confidence?

If your child seems to be beyond the activities and skills in this guide, perhaps they need a challenge? Our next guide, **A Parent Guide to Communication and Language for Ages 4 - 5** may be more suitable. Alternatively, you can always find more resources on the Twinkl Parents hub.



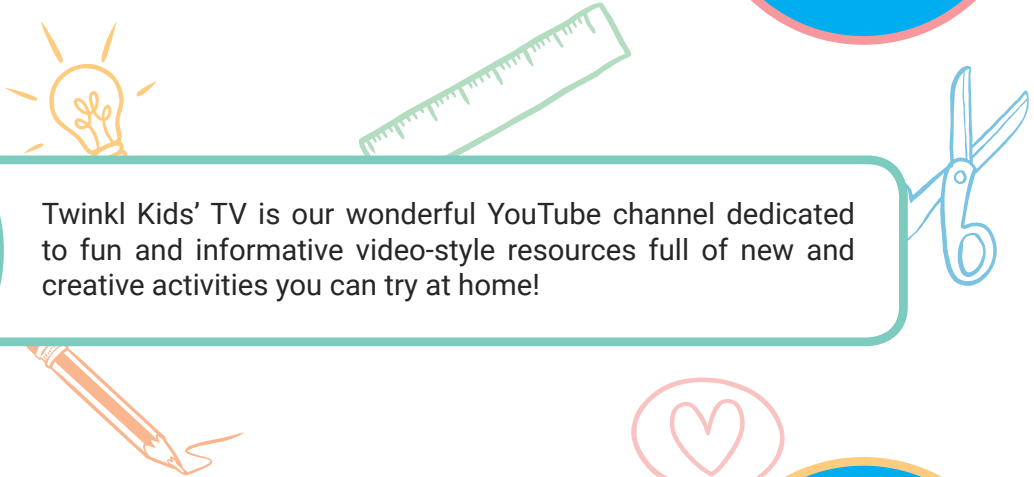
Explore and Discover More



Twinkl Go! is a digital platform, hosting interactive content such as videos, games, audiobooks and more. Twinkl Go! enables digital content to be streamed to your computer or mobile device.



Twinkl Kids' TV is our wonderful YouTube channel dedicated to fun and informative video-style resources full of new and creative activities you can try at home!



Twinkl Originals are engaging stories written to inspire children from EYFS to KS2. Designed to encourage a love of reading and help curriculum-wide learning through accompanying resources.



Children develop rapidly in their first five years, more so than any other period of their young life. Although these guides have been divided by age band, we recognise that all children develop at different rates; this guide should not be used as a tick list of exactly what your child should be able to do at this age, but rather as an indicator of what they may be working towards.