

# Fun communication activities to try at home

You will need to select activities that take into account your child's age and needs. Try to incorporate your child's interests where possible as this will encourage greater participation.



- 1. Every day outings** – A great way to start is to use every day activities like going to the shop, walking down the street to talk with your child about what you hear, what you smell, what you see. Encourage your child to notice what is around them, to share what they see/ hear/ smell/ touch. As they gain confidence, encourage your child to take on roles that encourage them to practice their communication skills such as asking for an item in the market or asking for the bill in a café.
- 2. Pretend telephones-** Using a toy telephones if you have them, if not use a piece of string and attach plastic cups to each end. Give your child one telephone and take the other yourself. Start with simple messages to your child and encourage them to respond. You can use more complex messages as your child's understanding grows.
- 3. What's happening in the picture** - Using a picture that depicts a scene such as the beach, children playing in the park. Ask your child to tell you what is happening in the picture. If your child enjoys art, you could ask them to draw a picture. Initially draw a picture yourself too and when your child has finished their picture, take it in turns to talk about your own pictures.

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**4. Make a communication board-** You can use different headings such as “My day”, “I feel”, “I need”. Laminate a variety of pictures your child can use to communicate and add Velcro to the back. You can use a ring binder to hold a number of boards which your child can take where ever they go.

## **5. Interactive book**

You can create interactive learning books for any life skills you are teaching your child including understanding yes/ no, telling the time, understanding money.

**6. “I spy”-** Before your child learns what letter words begin with, you can play “I spy” by encouraging your child to say something they see or hear or smell “I hear a cow”. Take it in turn with your child as this will promote their social skills and help them learn more vocabulary.

**7. Games** – Playing board games and outdoor games encourages your child to use repeated vocabulary and can be a great confidence booster as well as fun. Use key phrases that your child can repeat and learn “Your turn”, “my turn”, “ready, steady, go!”. These can be activities the whole family can enjoy.

**8. Story telling** – Find 4 or 5 child-safe objects from around the house and pop them into a child-safe bag. Support your child to make up a story. Start by saying “One day…” or “Once upon a time..”. Depending on your child’s age and understanding, you will need to adapt the game. Initially you may just want your child to name the object and you construct the story. As time goes on, they may be able to describe the object “A red, squishy ball”, then they may be able to add more description and creativity, taking on more responsibility for the story construction.

**9. A number or letter walk** - Depending on your child’s understanding, you may want to pick a number or letter and take a walk to try to spot the letter or number on signs, on car license plates, on shops and cafes, on street signs. As your child become more confident with letters and numbers you could choose several and make up a checklist or bingo board and challenge your child to find them. Introduce simple vocabulary at first and allow this to develop such as “Number”, “Found it!” and “Bingo!”. This activity does not require a child to have verbal communication, they can point, use a communication board.

**10. Songs-** Interactive songs are a fun way of developing vocabulary through repetition and give time for bonding with your child. Some examples include; (pre-schoolers) Row, Row, row your boat and Old Macdonald, (lower primary) “If you are happy and you know it” or “We’re going on a bear hunt!” (Upper primary) “Hokey Cokey”. If your child has a favourite programme or film, you can play it and sing along together.

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**11. Remembering games-** Start the game with the phrase “I went to Belmopan/ San Ignacio etc and I bought a” , then choose an item. Next encourage your child to say the phrase, the item you bought and add one of their own, You can interchange the theme and make it Holidays or birthdays. To help recognition of letter sounds, you could focus on words that begin with the same letter e.g. Your child’s name e.g. Joshua went on a trip to the zoo and saw a Jaguar.

**12. Making sounds-** These activities work for all abilities and will support children who are at the early stages of communicating with others to those are more practiced but need support to develop their listening skills and confidence.

**For younger children-** Read a story and encourage your child to make a noise when a particular character is mentioned e.g. In Red Riding Hood when the wolf is mentioned- bang a saucepan lid.

**Copy me-** Ensure you and your child have the same instruments/ objects. Put a barrier such as a book between you so they are unable to see you and ask them to copy the sound you make e.g. tapping a spoon on a bowl. You can extend this activity by introducing patterns of sounds for your child to copy.

To access further information and resources on disabilities, strategies to support children and young people and resources, please visit our online information and resources platform

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