



# How to help your child's communication skills at home

Information for parents and carers from the Children and Young People's Therapy Service

Children learn speech, language, and communication skills in their natural environment. As parents / carers there is so much you can do to support your child's development.

This leaflet aims to provide parents and carers with information, activities, and tips. If after reading this leaflet, you still have questions or concerns, please go to our Children and Young People's Therapy web page. (<https://www.ekhft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-peoples-therapy/>)

## Never underestimate the power of the parent!

Your role as a parent is crucial in supporting your child's development.

You know and love your child better than anyone else, and how you interact with them can make a big difference.

**It is important to recognise that you could be the best parent in the world doing all the right things, but your child may still struggle with their speech and language development. Some children just find it harder to talk.**

## Top tips for communication

1. Get down to your child's level when playing and talking with them.
2. Encourage any attempt at communication.
3. Play with your child for 10 minutes every day, turning off the television and other distractions. Copy their play rather than showing them what to do.
4. Comment on what your child is interested in, using a few simple words. Avoid asking them questions.
5. Avoid correcting your child, instead repeat back their word or sentence changing any small mistakes.

6. Whatever your child says, repeat it back to them and add another word.

### Top tips to support speech sounds

- Focus on what your child is saying and not if your child mispronounces a word. Say the correct word back to them. Do not ask your child to repeat it again.
- Syllable clap longer words, for example 'el-e-phant'.
- Play listening games, for example sound lotto.
- Find or sort toys by initial sound, for example toys beginning with 'd'.

### How can I help my child be ready for school?

There is so much you can do to support your child's speech and language development whilst they are waiting for an appointment with a therapist, and between therapy sessions.

- Talk to your child about starting school.
- Establish a good morning routine - use simple picture timetables. Examples of free timetables are available on the Twinkl web site. (<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>)
- Give your child responsibilities.
- Play instruction following games, such as Simon Says and Follow the Leader.
- Praise your child's good behaviours and be specific with praise, so they know what they have done well.
- Go for a listening walk, asking your child 'what can you hear?'
- Read stories together.
- Talk about the 'here and now'.
- Encourage your child to notice what others are doing.
- Have conversations with your child about what might happen next in a story or everyday situation.

### Makaton "Sign and Say"

Makaton (<https://www.makaton.org/>) is a communication system using speech, signs, and sometimes symbols. Using Makaton with your child can be very effective in supporting their communication, reducing frustration, and increasing confidence.

### Comments from parents

"Using Makaton took away my child's frustration as he had a way to communicate. We both feel better."

"Using Makaton kick started my child's communication. He became happier because he could communicate what was going on."

## Speech and Language Link

Kent Primary Schools use Speech and Language Link to screen your child's speech and language skills in school. This screen also identifies interventions that can be put in place by the school and these can be shared with parents to do at home.

As parents you can also access the Speech and Language Link parent portal (<https://speechandlanguage.link/parent-portal/>). Click on 'activities' for some ideas.

## Useful websites

- Speech Link Parent Portal (<https://speechandlanguage.link/parent-portal/>)
- Chatter pack (<https://chatterpack.net/>) Click on 'Blog' then 'speech and language, occupational therapy and SEND'
- ICAN (<https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/parents/>)
- BBC Tiny Happy People (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>)
- Hungry Little Minds (<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>)
- Makaton (<https://www.makaton.org/>)
- Singing Hands (<https://singinghands.co.uk/>)
- Afasic (<https://www.afasic.org.uk/>)

Follow our social media accounts for lots of ideas of how to support your child's communication skills, and links to other useful websites and resources.

- Facebook page: East Kent Children and Young People's Therapy Service
- Follow us on Twitter @ChildTherapyEK
- East Kent Children and Young People's Therapy Service (<https://www.ekhft.nhs.uk/services/children-and-young-peoples-therapy/>)

**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.**

**Please let us know:**

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

**You can let us know this by:**

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

**Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments**, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email ([ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)).

**Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient information leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

Reference number: Web 478

First published:  
June 2020

Last reviewed:  
September 2022

Next review date:  
January 2026

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.