

TEN TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS TO ENCOURAGE SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- Try to have a regular time for talking e.g. meal time, bed / bath time
- Turn off background noise. This makes it easier to listen and hear each other and it reduces distractions.
- Play games - car games such as "I spy...", "I'm thinking of..." games, guessing games and board games that encourage turn-taking. These also provide opportunities for speaking and listening in a structured way.
- Limit TV watching. Watch something together and then talk about it. What did you or your child enjoy? If the time is limited, the programme watching and listening is more focussed and the TV isn't just on as 'noisy wallpaper'.
- Use eye contact and other non-verbal clues to tell your child that you are listening. If s/he sees that you are interested s/he will be encouraged to talk more.
- Tell stories. These can be read or stories told about family members, as well as traditional tales.
- Sing songs; joining in familiar songs from children's TV programmes or sharing the lyrics of a pop song with an older child are fun and valuable.
- Make the most of contact with outsiders, extended family and neighbours. They give children the chance to practise and extend their speaking and listening skills among people with whom they feel secure. Grandparents are always proud of the abilities of their grandchildren and usually lavish attention and praise!
- Model language by rephrasing, expanding and checking for meaning. Listen to what your child says then repeat it back, but when you repeat it make sure you put in any missing 'little' words or word endings and add to it so the phrase is longer.
- Monitor your own language. How easy is it to understand? Explain new vocabulary to older children.

