

# Supporting learning

## Speaking clearly

Learning to speak clearly helps children to manage learning tasks, express ideas, needs and feelings clearly and get along with other people. Speaking clearly involves:

- saying sounds/words clearly and correctly, so others can understand them
- choosing clear and exact words to express ideas (vocabulary)
- organising ideas into sentences, sequences of sentences and using the correct sentence structures (grammar).

Children also need to learn to **use different types of words and sentences** to suit **different situations**, e.g. when they are describing, explaining, asking questions, imagining, negotiating, predicting, storytelling.

### Saying sounds/words clearly

Children develop the ability to say speech sounds, at different times. Children need to say sounds/words clearly so they can learn to read and write, and so other people can understand their ideas.

Most children (75%) can say the following sounds clearly:

- by the age of 4 years and 6 months – /h/, /zh/ (as in ‘measure’), /y/, /w/, /ng/ (as in ‘sing’), /m/, /n/, /p/, /k/ (‘car’ or ‘Kate’), /t/, /b/, /g/, /d/, /f/, /l/, /sh/, /ch/, /j/, /s/, /z/
- by the age of 6 – /r/ and /v/
- by the age of 8 years and 6 months – /th/.

You can help children by:

- showing them how to say/make a sound correctly  
e.g. The /l/ sound is made with the tongue just behind the top teeth. A /c/ sound is made at the back of the throat.
- asking children to look in the mirror and see where their tongue is or how they are using their mouth as they say difficult sounds
- practise saying words with the difficult letter at the beginning of words (e.g. /l/ – ‘leaf’, ‘light’, ‘lemon’), then at the end of words (e.g. /l/ – ‘riddle’, ‘feel’) and then in the middle of words (e.g. ‘pikelet’, ‘helmet’).

If you have any concerns about a child’s speech, talk to the child’s parents to find out more information.

### Choosing clear and exact words

During the preparatory year, it is important for children to learn many new and more exact words to describe and explain ideas, feelings and needs. Help children to use more exact words by:

- introducing new words or clearer ways to describe or explain ideas  
e.g. Words like ‘gigantic’, ‘prickly’, ‘bluish-green’/‘teal’, ‘predict’, ‘force’, ‘energy’, ‘cycle’, ‘cylinder’, ‘texture’
- asking children to add more detail or be more precise when talking  
e.g. Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_. Exactly what does it look like/sound like? What is another way to say/describe that?

## Organising words into sentences

Young children need to learn to share ideas **clearly** by:

- using **full** sentences, rather than single words or phrases  
e.g. Answer the question 'Where do these people live?' with 'They live in my house' rather than 'in my house'.
- using correct grammar (correct words/language structures)  
e.g. 'That is my sister' rather than 'That my sister' Or 'We went to the show' rather than 'We goed to the show'.
- organising ideas, so they make sense to others  
e.g. Saying, 'I rode my bike to find Dad and then I told him about the sick cow', rather than, 'I told dad about the cow. I did go to find him, but no, no, I had to ride there, and then when I found him, I told him, I said it was sick'.
- choosing exact words to make ideas in sentences clear  
e.g. Saying, 'I rode the big horse, Jack, and he rode the pony, Missy.' rather than 'I rode that one and that's his.'
- giving extra details, when asked.  
e.g. When asked 'Tell me more about your sister', gives details such as 'Her name is Katherine. She is bigger than me and she is in Year 3'.

Help children to organise ideas into sentences by:

- correcting their speech or sentence structures (grammar)
- repeating what they say in a more clear or precise way
- helping them to reorder their ideas and sentences to make ideas clearer
- showing children how to use correct/exact words/sentences
- prompting children to add ideas, tell you more, say it again/in a different way
- explaining why an idea is unclear to you and tell them what else you need to know.