

# The journey towards achieving independent spoken language use

Once your child can listen independently they start to listen to incidental language. This means that they start to listen to conversations that are not directed to them and they start to learn vocabulary which you have not targeted. It is an important stage for your child to reach and one which leads to an explosion of language skills.

It's hard to teach your child incidental language learning. You will know they are doing it because they will use phrases from children at school which your family don't use or they will know vocabulary you know you have not covered. They will start to ask you 'what are you talking about?' or they will add their comment to a conversation you are having with someone else.

You can help your child learn to listen to incidental language by adapting the listening environment at home to be the best it can be. (See *LISTEN: How to improve my child's listening environment.*)

Developing independent spoken language use is not related to your child's spoken language level. It's a natural LEAP at this age as the world they are living in is getting bigger. They are at school and clubs, away from the family, and so they need to learn to communicate their needs, wishes and thoughts with others.

## PRACTICE WHAT YOU WILL SAY

When your child is aged between 4 and 7, they will spend time in school in themed play areas or in pretend play. Work alongside the class teacher to develop your child's use of language in social situations. Practise the situations during pretend play sessions.

### g. Buying something

- Space Travel - buying provisions
- Shops - buying some food

### h. Asking a question about a product

- Estate Agents - asking about a house
- Restaurants - asking and answering questions and ordering.

### Create play scripts with direct speech your child could say.

- Act out the play script in the pretend play area
- You or a toy say the parts.
- Repeat this a couple of times.
- Ask your child to take the puppet. Can they say any of the puppet's phrases?
- At the end, ask your child to role play the play script without the puppet, adding their part appropriately.

Create play scripts including new vocabulary or sentence structures your child will need within their real life setting.

**PLAN OPPORTUNITIES AND PREPARE ANY SUPPORT NEEDED** Go to the local shop where you must ask for something rather than just hand it to you

e.g. stamps at a post office, sausages at the butchers. You can buy three stamps and your child can buy three stamps!

At meal times make sure each person has a missing piece of cutlery. Have a pile by your plate. Each person must ask for their item using a complete sentence e.g. Mom, please could you pass me a knife (so I can cut my potato)? **Help them to think through the problem. Encourage them to decide what to do or what is needed.**



Prepare and support to make independent communication a positive experience.

ll

"She doesn't pick up that incidental language naturally. So we are starting to realize there's a gap between her understanding of the world, and different vocabulary, to her hearing peers."

Parent



In a large family gathering –  
"Someone is near and if my  
child misses a conversation  
there is somebody to explain  
or check – we often repeat  
things that have been said."

Parent

## BE AWARE OF TIMES WHEN COMMUNICATION IS DIFFICULT OR SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR VOCABULARY NEEDS REVIEWING

Openly talk about a situation that was difficult to communicate in, identify what was going on, talk about what might help or simply sympathize that sometimes it's hard and they just need to keep on trying.

Remember words you have focused upon.

Listen and gently pick up on words used in the wrong context.

Have high expectations of what they 'could' say.

### VIEW YOUR CHILD'S DAY OR WEEK

If they don't know what they are doing, how can they sort it out or problem solve as things arise. Help them to know what is happening and when. This helps them to organize themselves and to independently think through what is needed. It also reinforces the language they can use when talking about what they are doing.

### CREATE A COMMUNICATION BOOK

A communication book should be made jointly with your child. It can be the basis to start talking about what they need in order to communicate successfully.

Use pictures and statements to highlight what other adults and children can do to help your child understand.

Encourage your child to think that they can ask others to do this for them, e.g. say it again, slow down, move to somewhere quieter to talk to them.

Role play this in different situations.

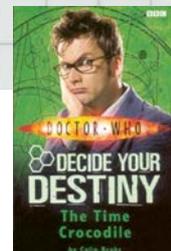
Keep this book at school; show it to new teachers as a basic introduction.

In order to Achieve Communicative Independence, they must be able to think through problems. Do this through your conversations, present a problem you had that day – what can you do?

### ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO MAKE DECISIONS AND TO THINK THROUGH WHY THEY HAVE CHOSEN THIS OPTION

Start off very concrete. Use books which encourage you to talk about what decisions to make. Certain books allow the reader to make their own decisions by reading a page and then deciding which page to turn to depending upon the choices or decisions you make. Simple ideas:

- Dr Who is very brave so I will always choose the bravest option
- Because of XYZ I think ABC
- Think about deductions from the passage or pictures given e.g. Listening and Thinking games
- Problem Solving



### ONLINE VIDEOS



It can be difficult for your child, but support all their attempts to communicate independently.

- › REF: 4.2 When I don't get it right

### ONLINE VIDEOS



Support your child in practically having a go at communicating in different contexts.

"Initiating and supporting conversations I believe helps develop her confidence."  
– Parent.

- › REF: 4.2 Letting them have a go

If I know what I'm doing I can think it through and work out what I need more independently.

- › REF: 4.2 Regularly review your day

Highlight what others can do to help your child communicate successfully.

- › REF: 4.2 Talk about how others can help me communicate

Independent listening helps your child keep up with their peers.

- › REF: 4.2 How is your child progressing?

ACHIEVE

ACHIEVING COMMUNICATIVE INDEPENDENCE

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## GIVE YOUR CHILD SOMETHING TO SAY

Make sure you know what the playground is talking about. Know what the current craze is. Know the main characters and a little about what each one does. Be up to date with the latest TV show. Discuss who you like or dislike and why, watch some of it together. Choose a football team to support. Identify the key players, their names and skills, what you like or don't like about them.

## SOMETIMES IT'S JUST HARD

There will continue to be circumstances which are hard. Acknowledge this, and support how you can.

- Give your child strategies to manage the situation.
- Support them as much as possible.
- Focus upon what they can do in these circumstances.
- Encourage self-confidence; we all find some things harder than others.

*"I just get on with what I think they said" – Child with cochlear implant*

### ONLINE VIDEOS



**Difficult communication situations – what do parents do?**

› REF: 4.2 When we are in a difficult communication situation

*something to do*

### To Communicate Independently your child needs quite a few sub skills. What are they and how can we develop them?

There are different types of language tasks or sub skills your child will need to master if they are to achieve communicative independence. We have given you some ideas and activities to help you do this in a fun family way.

- ✓ Asking for things
- ✓ Giving information in the here and now
- ✓ Giving information outside the here and now
- ✓ Saying things politely to others who are less familiar or in authority
- ✓ Giving instructions in the here and now
- ✓ Following instructions in the here and now
- ✓ Giving instructions outside the here and now
- ✓ Following instructions outside the here and now
- ✓ Re-telling stories – narrative
- ✓ Film critique
- ✓ Giving opinions

**Remember:** By building up regular conversation times and through everyday events we can help our children learn all these skills at their own language level. As they progress they will naturally make the language they use more complex.

*"Sometimes he hears, sometimes he doesn't – he gets involved in exactly the same way as any other child."*

Parent



## KEY SKILLS AND ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE COMMUNICATING INDEPENDENTLY

### ACTIVITY: Asking for Things

- Objects
- Food
- Information

This is very motivating for children – to get something! Expect the use of a polite phrase with the request at your child's language level. Use the same phrase in lots of different contexts e.g. 'Please may I have some milk?'

#### Giving information outside the here and now

*'What has happened at school today, what did they have for lunch?'*

*'Mommy, I need my swimming equipment tomorrow.'*

### ACTIVITY: The Compliments and Kindness Game

Choose a card at the beginning of the day. Pick a day when you will see each other more, possibly at the weekend.

At first play in pairs – adult + child or as a whole family having the same compliment. As you all get better at the game, choose a card each and have different compliments. Once you have the card, put your name on it and stick it to the fridge for the weekend. Everyone knows what compliment you are trying to use.

- *Thank you, that was very kind.*
- *This tastes yummy.*
- *I really like \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Would you like some help with \_\_\_\_\_?*
- *Thank you for doing \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *I really liked it when you \_\_\_\_\_ thank you.*
- *I'm very proud of \_\_\_\_\_.*

 **NOTE: Cards are available in the Resources Section item# 3A.**

#### Giving instructions in the here and now

If you listen to your child you will be surprised at how often they are giving you and their siblings instructions.

*'Before I go to Scouts I need to find my uniform and you need to sew on my new badge please.'*

Give instructions to go to different places around the house to follow a trail to find some chocolate – give spoken or written clues, vary their complexity depending upon your child's language skills. Let them have a turn telling you.

- *'Go to the cat basket.'*
- *'Look on the top shelf of the fridge.'*
- *'Go to Mom's bedroom and look by her bedside light.'*
- *'Go upstairs, take the second door on the left, look in the cupboard on the right.'*

Create imaginative recipes for things e.g. Incredible shampoo. Mix the ingredients together in a bowl. Would you use it? Probably not! Extend this by giving a reason for why you are putting the item in.

- *'2 squirts of liquid soap – to clean your hair, 3 spoonfuls of orange squash to make it a nice color, 1 spoonful of cooking oil to make your hair smooth'*

Magic spells – what will happen when you put it into the pot?

Read a section of *George's Marvellous Medicine* by Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake (Published by Puffin Books). He puts lots of very unusual things into his creation!

*'It's time to go to bed. Go upstairs, put on your pajamas, do your teeth and find our bedtime reading book.'*

Give and follow directions while cooking together.

*'First we need to melt the butter. Then we crack the egg into a small bowl and whisk it with some milk. After that we carefully pour the mixture into the hot pan. We stir all the time until it is thick. That is how you make scrambled egg.'*

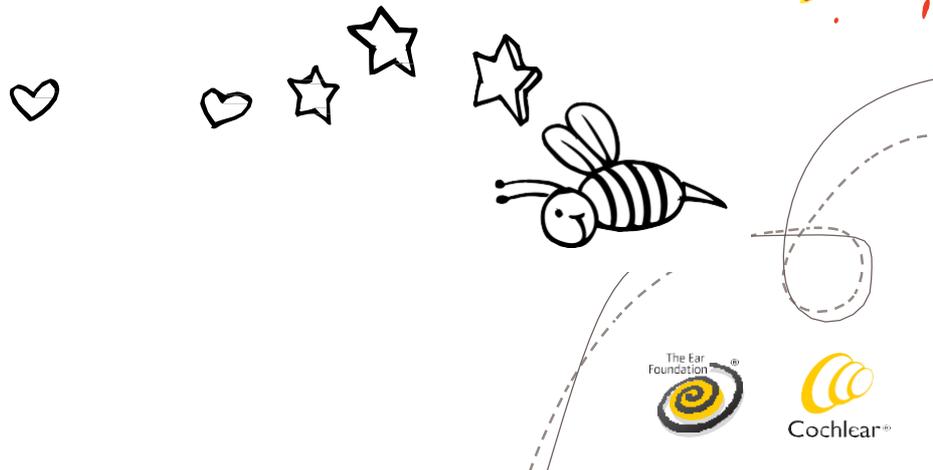
Talk about an event, order your day.

*'When we go to the park we will feed the ducks first, then we'll walk round to the swings area and after that please can we walk to the wood?'*

*'Go to the post office, ask for 4 stamps and a newspaper. Give them this money and then wait for the change.'*

Instructions often involve several sequencing words e.g. First, Second, And, Then, At the end, After that, Before X, After Y.

**Remember:** When telling a story you need to be ordered and logical. They must have a beginning – middle – end.



# › ACHIEVE – 3A



## ACTIVITY: Compliment Cards



Thank you, that was very kind.

This tastes yummy.

I really like \_\_\_\_\_.

Would you like some  
help with \_\_\_\_\_?

Thank you for doing \_\_\_\_\_.

I really liked it when you \_\_\_\_\_  
thank you.

I'm very proud of \_\_\_\_\_.

