

Chit Chat First Words

You and your child have your own needs, interests and goals. Your family will have unique life experiences and these provide the basis for the words and sentences your child will hear, learn and need.

Remember:

- Your child may have different language interests and may develop at a different rate to some children you meet;
- First words are usually produced at home and during everyday routines and you will be able to recognize your child's words attempts better than teachers or therapists;
- First words are related to the words most often used with a child e.g. those used often by the mother;
- Many words are not used often enough to be observed by teachers or therapists so you have important information to share with your professionals.

The first words your child will say

– these will include single words, perhaps some frozen phrases and eventually true word combinations.

What are Single Words (SW)?

These are words used in an appropriate situation and said consistently (used in the same way). Some single words that could be in your child's list of first words are: "Mum/ ball/ dog/ car/ juice/ banana/ hot/ no/ bath/ eye/ nose/ book/ mine/ where?" Remember words do not have to have all the sounds or right sounds to be considered a word as long as your child says the word consistently eg dog could be 'gog' or 'dody' – as long as he says the same word for a dog it is a word.

Words also include:

- Sound associations e.g. brmm, sh
- Interactive words e.g. bye, uh-oh, peek-a-boo
- Others words e.g. poo, wee, yuk, yummy
- Words in songs don't count
- Compound words e.g. good-boy
- Swear words
- Baby words e.g. nana for banana, baba for baby

What are Frozen Phrases (FP)?

These are phrases with two or more words, used in an appropriate situation and in the same way but where your child does not use the words as separate words. Your child does not know the words individually and has learnt the phrase as one chunk rather than each word. Examples include: "All gone/ here are/ what's that?/ love you/ put it back/ there it is" As your child has learnt the phrase as a unit it is counted as a single word.

What are True Word Combinations (TWC)?

These are combinations of 2 or more words said in an appropriate situation. At least two of the words have been said by your child previously as a single word or frozen phrase.

You should also include any word used more than once in a word combination and not previously recorded as a separate word. Only record three examples of a combination involving a particular word.

Keeping a first words diary:

- Start to keep the diary when your child is just beginning to say words;
- Agree on one person in the family to write in the diary and add the words you or your family hear your child say soon after the word is said;
- Write down spontaneous words only, don't try to make your child copy a word so that you can add it to the list!
- Write down all words & combinations up to 100 different words;
- Write the word, date, situation for the first and second time your child uses it;
- Enjoy talking with your child and listening to their first words but remember to respond to what they say.

