

TO LISTEN MEANS TO HAVE A CONVERSATION

Listen to your child and listen to yourself!

When was the last time I had a conversation with my child?

When in our day could I have a conversation with my child?

A conversation is not –

- Giving instructions
- Controlling behavior
- Asking lots and lots of questions

A conversation is –

- Listening and responding
- Adding comments and life experience

Conversations need to become part of everyday life.

Listen for opportunities to build upon what they are saying.

"Where you would perhaps not normally make any conversation it was just constant - it was just part of our routine - it was every day whatever we were doing we were just talking about it." (parent)

Conversations are an exchange between people.

A conversation is about listening and responding and adding our comments and life experiences. Your child can engage in conversations with simple spoken language, but it will take effort and more planning.



How to have simple conversations

USE DAILY ROUTINES OR SHARED ACTIVITIES

Use daily routines to have a conversation e.g. packing their school bag.

This gives your child context. They know what you are likely to be saying, you talk about similar things each day and they become more and more familiar with the language they can use.

ADD VISUAL REFERENCES

Talk about things linking them with something visual: home life, everyday objects, photographs, school papers. Create visual diaries or simple records of things they are interested in. A whole conversation can be built off one picture!

MODEL CONVERSATIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Ask the same questions of each other, talk about similar things each day. This means your child is familiar with what is being talked about. They hear how others comment and respond, and so learn how they can join in.

"Just conversations so that it's constant talking - we're hoping he just picks it all up - that he models the sounds on his sisters and on us and he picks up the conversation that way - just using every opportunity - we make the most of going out and talking about it - we make sure his sisters are there so that he can hear them talk." (parent)

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Recognise good and bad conversations. Here's a bad one!

- REF: 2.1a – Good and Bad Conversations

Here's a good conversation: pause, listen, respond & add.

- REF: 2.1b – A Good Conversation

Help your child hear conversations.

- REF: 2.2 Regular Conversations

Model conversations within the family.

- REF: 2.2 Base a conversation around an object picture book or calendar

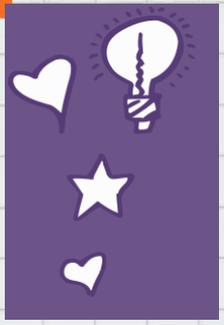
Give your child the context of the conversation through pictures.

- REF: 2.2 Take every opportunity to have a conversation

Familiar conversations build confidence.

- REF: 2.2 Have a conversation every day





something to do

ACTIVITY: Family Conversation Game
 Refer to Resources Section 1A. Cut out these cards.

Place prompt question cards on the table during snack or meal times.

Either use the same prompt question (easier) or choose a prompt question card each (harder).

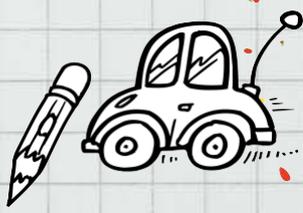
Some questions require more thought than others, so select carefully.

Make up your own questions.

| | |
|---|---|
| What did you do today that you enjoyed? | How many different forms of transport did you use today? |
| Tell us about some time today which you spent on your own. What did you do? | Tell us 5 things you have eaten today. Which was your favourite? |
| Did something happen today which you were sad about? | Name 10 people you talked to today. |
| Have you had 5 portions of fruit or vegetable today? What were they? | Who was the first person to see you today apart from your family? |



Remember: My child wants to have a conversation with me. How can I best support and extend these conversations?



> LISTEN – 1A

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS

ACTIVITY: Family Conversation Game



| | |
|---|---|
| What did you do today that you enjoyed? | How many different forms of transport did you use today? |
| Tell us about some time today which you spent on your own. What did you do? | Tell us 5 things you have eaten today. Which was your favourite? |
| Did something happen today which you were sad about? | Name 10 people you talked to today. |
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Become a mind reader!

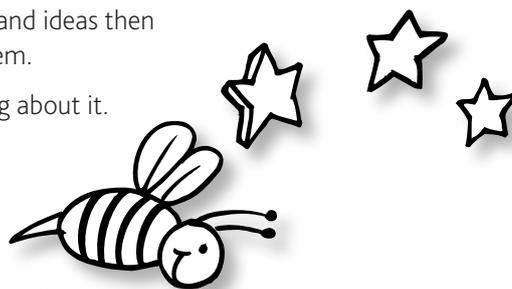
What is your child thinking about?

Enjoy activities in line with your child's thinking and ideas then adapt your language level to be accessible to them.

Children learn language faster if they are thinking about it.

- Listen to what your child is saying.
- Watch what they are doing.
- Work out what they are thinking.
- Map language onto these thoughts.

Give your child the language they are experiencing e.g. 'juicy pineapple' as they are having snacks.



Remember: Add personal experience, comments & questions to prolong conversations and limit monologues!

Conversations encourage thinking. Move beyond the here and now, try and extend the conversation.

"I would try and fit it in with what he was doing - if I tried to talk to him about something not interesting then he would just switch off and carry on playing." (parent)

How can I encourage conversations?

The more conversations you have and the longer your shared conversations are, the more opportunities your child has to learn.

Use these techniques to encourage your child to join in with a conversation, but if they don't choose to, you can continue the conversation without pressuring them. They will gradually hear different ways of responding and in time conversations will grow.

TECHNIQUES TO GENERATE AND EXTEND CONVERSATIONS

Remember the balance in conversations –

At first the adult will be supporting the conversations. Gradually there will be a more equal exchange.

Always accept your child's attempts at conversation –

Never correct when trying to support longer conversations. Remember your mind reading and try and respond to them.

Prompt your child to take their turn –

If you have made a comment or a sister has answered the same question, prompt your child to take their turn.

Ask the same question to different family members –

Let your child hear others' responses and then they can have a try. Set up scenarios where each child takes their turn.

Give your child a choice –

Suggest two or three items to choose from.

E.g. When practicing the weekly spellings

'Shall we use a pen or a pencil?' (pause for around 5 seconds, if no response)

'Here, I've found a pencil.' **Ask yourself questions (rhetorical questions)**

E.g. I wonder what we should have for dinner tonight?

E.g. What shall we do if it rains today?

Ask Wh- questions



E.g. What shall we have for dinner tonight?
E.g. Who made such a fantastic model at school?
E.g. Who hung their coat up so neatly? Well done, Timothy. You have put your coat and school bag away.

Use a 'WOW' statement - pause - what will they tell you?

E.g. Wow, what an amazing picture.
E.g. Wow, what beautiful hair.

Make a statement which will prompt a comment or a question and pause. What will they say? Add your own comments to the conversation.

E.g. I had a really great day today - pause --
E.g. I had a boring day today.
E.g. I spent lots of money today.
E.g. I felt very proud today.

Ask open questions

E.g. Tell me about --?
E.g. What do you remember most --?

Avoid direct questions

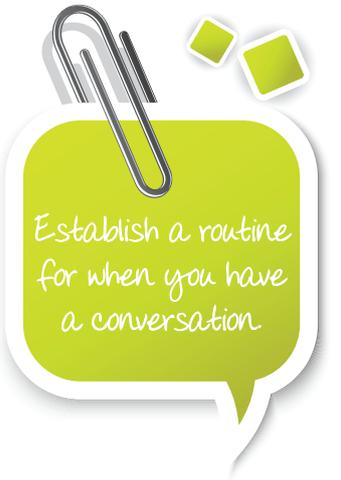
Try not to ask Yes/No questions, they put your child under pressure to follow your thoughts and don't give space or support for using more language.

Acknowledge your child's comments, E.g. Mmmmm, oh, I see. (These are called phatics.)

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Techniques to encourage conversations

➤ REF: 2.2 Techniques to encourage longer conversations



Establish a routine for when you have a conversation

Conversations with a quieter child

Quieter children still need to have conversations.

Support these conversations more and make sure they are not pressured to take their turn.

- Model conversations with others in the family so that they have heard possible responses several times already.
- Ask a question and pause to see if they will respond. Pause for longer than you might expect to give them time to think and create their contribution.
- If they do not respond, answer the question yourself so that the conversation can continue and your child can hear how they could have answered.
- Manage turn taking within the family so that they know when they can add or comment.



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Use prompt cards and questions to develop conversations within the family.

➤ REF 2.2. Play the family conversation game