

## Tips for Talking: children aged 3 - 4 years

At this stage, children will be actively learning language – being inquisitive and asking many questions.

**Children will develop language skills at different rates, but at this stage typically children will be:**

- Still making mistakes with tense, for example, saying 'runned' for ran and 'swimmed' for swam
- Enjoying make believe
- Describing events that have already happened – 'we went park'
- Understanding and often using colour, number and time-related words, for example, 'red Car', 'three fingers' and 'yesterday/tomorrow'.
- Listening to longer stories than before
- Continuing to ask many questions
- Starting to like simple jokes
- Using longer sentences and linking these sentences together
- Having a few difficulties with a small number of sounds – for example r/w/l, f/th and s/sh/ch/dz



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## Here are some simple ideas to encourage children's language development at this stage:

- Having a special time to talk about the day can be useful as it gives them a time to talk. Talking about what has happened that day will help your child's memory skills. It also helps them to talk about things they cannot immediately see and to talk about the things which happened in the past.
- Wherever possible, use pictures or objects to aid children's attention and interest, for example, pictures in books, puppets acting out stories or gestures and facial expressions to support questions.
- Talk about or play games involving opposites like 'on and off' or 'big and little'.
- Join your child in pretend play – let the child take the lead and see what their imagination brings. It will help you expand their language beyond what they can immediately see and develop their creativity. Try to comment on what they are saying and doing rather than asking lots of questions. This not only reinforces their language skills, but also shows them that you are interested and listening to them.
- Reversing roles with a child can be great fun for them – where they are the 'mummy' or the 'teacher' and asking adults to do things. This sort of thing makes using language fun and broadens their use of language to new situations.
- Talk about time and sequences – play with and talk about sequences of coloured bricks or shapes as well as numbers and days of the week.



**If you have concerns about your child's speech or language at this stage, let your Health Visitor know. She can make an appointment with a Speech and Language Therapist for you.**



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