Leeds Community Healthcare NHS
NHS Trust

Having Fun With Language

A resource package for developing language and communication through groups in Early Years settings



Leeds Speech and Language Therapy Service

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Children and Family Services

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Having Fun With Language

Introduction to Having Fun With Language

"Speech, language and communication skills are fundamental to the development of learning and social and emotional well-being. They are essential to support the development of skills for life and work"

The Communication Trust: Every Child Understood (2008)

This is a pack to develop language and communication skills for all young children in any Early Years setting. It provides ideas of how to set up and run language groups which can be flexible to meet the needs of your setting.

It has been designed with links to **Every Child Matters** and the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**, with all activities promoting development in communication, language and literacy as well as personal, social and emotional development.

The activities in this pack aim to develop:

- **early communication skills e.g. turn taking, eye contact**
- **attention and listening skills**
- **understanding of language**
- **expressive language**
- **vocabulary**
- **confidence and self-esteem**
- **social interaction**

It is designed to be used with groups of young children whether they have language difficulties or not.

Please contact your named Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) if you would like further support or information in establishing groups. For children with specific speech and language difficulties, the SLT will still be involved. For settings without a named SLT, contact the Leeds SLT service at St Mary's Hospital on tel: **0113 305 5307 / 305 5308 / 305 5309**.

There are a wide variety of courses available from the Leeds SLT Service to support settings when working with children who have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Contact the SLT secretaries on **0113 305 5307 / 305 5308 / 305 5309** for more information or visit **www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/cslt**

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Running language groups

There are several ways to run language groups to suit your settings needs; from structured topic based groups to ones that make use of areas of provision in the setting and adapt existing activities.

The new guidance from the National Strategies makes it clear that practitioners need to use a range of approaches to meet children's needs:

'Practitioners with children of nursery and reception age sometimes feel uncertain about providing an appropriate combination of child-initiated and adult led activities, and balancing open-ended play and exploration and direct teaching in adult-led activities. The EYFS and Early Learning Goals, however, provide sufficient flexibility for practitioners to follow children's interests, respond to their ideas for developing play activities, and provide structured activities (which can also be playful) to teach specific knowledge and skills.' (Learning, Playing and Interacting: Good practice in the EYFS)

A structured language group approach

- Groups could be carried out once or twice a week for a set number of weeks e.g. half termly
- Sessions would usually last between 15-30 minutes depending on the age and attention levels of the children
- A group of children is selected to take part
  - Any child can be selected and would benefit
  - You may want to prioritise children needing input to develop their language skills, those with English as an additional language or those who need to develop their confidence/social skills
  - Include members in the group to act as good role models
- The group could be delivered as a rolling programme within the setting, changing the children taking part in each block of sessions.
- Several groups could be run within the same half term to allow more children to benefit – each group could work towards a different focus depending on the needs/ability levels of the group, or the same session plans/resources could be used to target different children.

At the beginning of the block of sessions:

1] Consider choosing a topic from the list or build upon a current theme in your setting to be used throughout the sessions.

2] Gather together real objects, toys, small world objects, pictures, photos, puppets, books, inset puzzles etc, relating to this topic/theme (e.g. store them all together in a 'language box').

3] Choose a 'quiet' area to work in.

Before each session:

1] Select **one Attention and Listening** activity and **one or two language** activities from the pack.

2] Complete a Planning and Progress Record Sheet – choose a whole group or individual child record sheet (see Appendix 2).

3] Gather resources and prepare for the session.

After the session, complete the Planning and Progress Record Sheet and plan for the next session. Also fill in a parent follow up ideas for home sheet.

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Circle/carpet time language groups

A more informal approach could be used to promote good communication skills in your setting. For example the activities could be carried out within your group/carpet time several times a week.



Larger groups of children could be split into smaller groups according to practitioners available. Practitioners can choose a selection of activities to carry out from the attention and listening and language sections of this pack. These toys/games could be ones not usually used in the setting to capture the children's interests.

'Language boxes' could be made up containing real objects, toys, small world objects, pictures, photos, puppets, books, inset puzzles, story sacks, games, lottos etc. These could be focussed around one theme/topic or could reflect current setting's targets e.g. increasing attention and listening levels.

Making use of opportunities within the areas of provision

Activities that promote good attention/listening and language skills should be ongoing within areas of provision in all settings as set out in the EYFS. This pack can be used for ideas to enhance a communication rich environment. For example if a practitioner is supporting children within water play, they can encourage relevant vocabulary and model language for children; including actions/concepts such as pouring, splashing, washing and wet/dry, on/under, boat/fish etc.

Practitioners need to set up activities and spend time interacting with the children in a variety of role play areas. Initially these should be based on familiar places such as the home corner, a shop or hairdressers. For older children, be more adventurous and link activities to real-life experiences such as trips, stories and other activities e.g. a post office, police station, travel agents. 'Using a more unusual role play area inspires children to use language for a range of purposes' (Letters and Sounds, DFES 2007).



It is also really important to take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities to promote and model language, 'Join children in their play to extend their talk and enrich their vocabulary,' Letters and Sounds, DFES 2007.

Use the strategies and techniques suggested later in the pack to promote communication and interaction during play.

Why not set up a **'talking table'** in your room with photos/real objects/books for your chosen topic.

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Groups focusing on SLT targets

There may be some children in your setting who have specific work from a SLT. You can support this child within a group, choosing other children who will provide good role models or those who would benefit from language enrichment/social skills development or confidence building. Select appropriate activities from this pack which will work towards the child's specific targets. For example, if a child has a target set by a SLT to develop vocabulary skills then you could use ideas from this pack to run a group targeting topic vocabulary work and include the child in the group.

All practitioners need to be aware of children's individual SLT targets and work together during planning sessions to ensure these skills are developed in all areas of provision. This could be supported by visual reminders in various areas around the room.



'Practitioners need to identify those children who have a limited language experience. They need to ensure that these children are being included in regular structured language activities that particularly focus on developing vocabulary. This must not be left to chance. The early years of a child's life will lay the foundations for their understanding of language and their later success in literacy' The National Strategies, Early Years 2008.

This pack aims to improve communication skills in all children within early years settings. However, children with Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN) will benefit from frequent targeted intervention within 1:1 or small groups which are largely free from distractions. These children may need to be referred to Speech and Language Therapy if they are not already supported by the SLT service. Please consult the Leeds SLT Referral Guidelines if you have particular concerns about a child.

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Considerations for practitioners

How many groups to run?

This depends on which model you decide to use e.g. circle time groups could be carried out more frequently (up to daily) where as structured language groups could run 1-2 times per week (with the same targeted children) for a block of sessions.

More than one group can be run per week to ensure children could be included that do not attend full time. If this is not practical then you could alternate both the day or time the group is run each half term.

Chose a way of running groups that fits in with your setting that will be most practical. Start small, give priority and limit cancellations to have the most success.

Timing

- Length of groups (ideally 15-30 minutes)
- Time of day e.g. considering breaks, meal times etc
- Making use of opportunities e.g. when majority of children are playing outside, you could use the quieter indoor provision

Who?

The setting needs to decide if one or two lead practitioners' versus all key practitioners will be responsible for running groups (considering 'back up' in the event of absence).

'A small group size is preferable, to allow all of the children to have sufficient time to participate in and respond to the activity' (Letters and Sounds, DFES). Depending on factors such as age and ability, group size can be flexible but would ideally be between 4 – 6 children.

Where?

- In a quiet and as distraction free area as possible. Be flexible and creative and use objects such as play tents, make dens, use outdoor space etc to create a better communication environment.

  'If the environment is too noisy then children will have difficulty concentrating on their tasks or listening' (National Strategies, ECaT 2008).
- Be aware of distractions from other children in the setting, wall displays, noise levels, toys or games within reach etc, as these may all affect a child's ability to listen and take part in the chosen activity.
- Consider using 'Communication friendly spaces' – Basic Skills Agency, 2007.

Parents as partners

Inform and involve parents in how the setting has chosen to promote and encourage communication (see EYFS 'Principles into Practise' card 2.2). Settings may provide follow up activities for home. For example, let parents know of any activities or topic words they can follow up at home and encourage parents to bring in any photos, toys, cultural materials that can be shared with all the children in the group. Also, provide pictures/resources/books to loan to parents to follow up any activities (see 'parent follow up ideas for home' sheet).

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Linking this pack to:

The Early Years Foundation Stage

This pack is linked to all four themes of the EYFS:

- A Unique Child
- Positive Relationships
- Enabling Environments
- Learning and Development

'The development and use of speech, language and communication are at the heart of young children's learning… Children's later achievements are dependant on being able to communicate effectively.' (National Strategies, Early Years, Inclusion Development Programme, Supporting children with SLCN 2008)

The activities in this pack help children work towards achieving all four themes but in particular will support children achieve within the 'Learning and Development' theme and more specifically within the area of 'Communication Language and Literacy'.

The EYFS tells us that from birth onwards children should be helped to develop:

- Language for communication
- Language for thinking
- Linking of sounds and letters
- Reading
- Writing

'In order to progress to become competent readers and writers, children need to have developed good speech, language and communication skills… Children need to have well developed vocabularies.' (National Strategies, Early Years, Inclusion Development Programme, Supporting children with SLCN 2008).

Most activities will have at least one reference to the EYFS Development Matters section to enable practitioners to plan activities and observations e.g. Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities CLL: LSL (Communication Language and Literacy: Linking Sounds and Letters) 30-50 months.

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‘Letters and Sounds’ (DFES 2007)

This pack incorporates some of the ideas from Phase One of Letters and Sounds which falls largely within the Communication Language and Literacy area of learning in the EYFS.

Every Child Matters

Communication is fundamental to achieving the 5 outcomes set out in Every Child Matters: Change for Children (DFES 2004). The 5 outcomes are for all children to:

1] Stay Safe

2] Be Healthy

3] Enjoy and Achieve

4] Make a positive contribution

5] Achieve economic well-being

The activities in this pack support children to develop competence in all 5 areas.

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Topics/themes

It is preferable to use one topic/theme regularly e.g. per half term so the children become familiar with and retain the vocabulary. Share targets/vocabulary with parents for them to practise at home. You could use the follow up ideas for home sheet/adapt it to your setting.

Introduce new words in the context of play activities Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication 30–50 months

Activities around an experience

- **Daily routines:** getting washed, dressed, coming to nursery, holidays, shops
- **Nursery trip/event:** farm, birthday
- **Story book:** 'We're going on a bear hunt'
- **Personal to family/child experiences**

First words/simple vocabulary

- **Social word:** hello, goodbye, thank you
- **Motivating words:** more, gone, ready steady go, again, uh-oh
- **Basic vocabulary:** ball, book, car, baby, drink, mummy/care giver, cat, dog, favorite food/toys

Animals

- **Easy vocabulary:** cat, dog, bird, duck, bee, fish, spider, cow, snake, horse, pig, rabbit
- **Harder vocabulary:** elephant, giraffe, bear, lion, monkey, frog, mouse

Body parts/clothes

- **Simpler words first:** nose, eyes, hair, tummy, socks, hat, coat, shoes
- **Move on to harder words:** knees, shoulders, jumper, trousers, pyjamas

Transport/construction area

- Car, bus, tractor, bike, plane, helicopter and noises such as brm brm, beep beep, choo choo

Food and drink/snack time

- Biscuit, apple, banana, cake, juice, milk, spoon, cup, plate, pizza, dinner

Home

- Bath, bed, chair, table, cup, spoon, TV, door, telephone, key, book

Vocabulary from role play area in nursery

- Shops, doctors, hairdressers, garage, post office, holiday

Outdoors

- Flower, tree, gate, road, grass, sun, stars, moon, swing, rain, bus, car. garden, park, slide

Action words

These are words to be encouraged in addition to the object words from the lists above and are needed for children to be able to begin linking words together:

- jumping, brushing, eating, drinking, sleeping, washing, crying, reading, playing, splashing

Concepts

- **Size:** big, little
- **Position:** in, on, under
- **Shapes:** circle, square, triangle
- **Colours:** red, blue, green, yellow
- **Numbers:** 1–5, 5–10
- **Adjectives:** dirty, clean, hot, cold, wet, dry

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Making a communication friendly setting

- **Parents know the most about their child** – find out about how the child communicates, what their likes and dislikes are and what is happening in their life. Key practitioners should regularly liaise with parents and find out what is important in a child's life to facilitate communication e.g. a visit to the local park, trip to the seaside.
- **Children communicate in different ways** e.g. gesture, signing, symbols, vocalising, talking. It is important to encourage and praise all attempts to communicate and interact and for practitioners to use the child's method of communication e.g. Makaton signing.
- Each practitioner needs to **aim to have a conversation with each child every day.**
- **Provide opportunities throughout the day** for children to speak to adults and other children about their thoughts and feelings.
- Practitioners need to **get down to the child's level** to communicate and **follow their lead.**
- Be a good listener and **give the child time to respond** – this 'allows children to think about what has been said, gather their thoughts and frame their reply. Some children with SLCN may need more thinking time to process information and put together and respond… be comfortable with children's silences.' (National Strategies IDP Supporting children with SLC needs 2008)
- **Use appropriate levels of language** for all children, dependent on their age and level of development. Support communication both one to one and in a group situations.
- **Make use of everyday situations** such as snack time, getting changed, tidying up etc, and through all incidental and planned play activities to comment on what is happening so children learn to link words with actions/events.
- Use a **multi sensory approach** to teach new words to make it more fun and memorable e.g. to touch, taste and smell a new fruit.
- Use a **full range of expression** – using lively animated voices with gestures and facial expressions to back up your spoken language. This helps give clues to children who have difficulties understanding language.
- Use a **wide range of visuals** – story props, signs, pictures, photos; symbols e.g. keep toys/ resources in boxes labelled with photo/symbol/written label. Have interactive displays that are accessible to the children e.g. photos, posters within children's eye line.
- Make a **plan of your setting** – include all the areas. Where does the most communication happen? Why? Are there any areas where communication can be promoted further? Could you make use of tents, 'dens' etc to create a quiet area where children can talk to each other and develop friendships (See EcAT for further details).
- **Share these ideas of good practice with parents** so they can try the same things at home. Keep them informed of books, topics or themes that you are focussing on so they can follow this up at home.

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Promoting communication

- **Expand** language by scaffolding and adding words:
  Child: 'Milk'
  Adult: 'Milk's gone'

  Child: 'I drew a butterfly'
  Adult: 'Yes you drew a red butterfly. It's beautiful'
- **Model** by repeating the child's sentence in a more 'mature' form:
  Child: 'Him's eat biscuit'
  Adult: 'Yes he is eating a biscuit'
- Keep your **language levels simple.**
- Use daily routines and activities for **repetition** of basic vocabulary/actions.
- **Join** in a child's play or **mirror** their actions.
- **Wait** and allow a child time to start an interaction – children need thinking time!
- Give **choices** to increase vocabulary e.g. 'would you like **orange** or **apple**?'
- **Comment** on what a child is doing or looking at.
- **Try not to ask too many questions!** It can stop the natural flow of conversation and may make the child feel like they are being tested.
- **Have fun together** with songs and rhymes.
- **Make use of opportunities** that promote the development of listening skills e.g. when playing outside and an aeroplane flies overhead.



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Attention and listening activities

Attention and listening are vital skills in the development of language, speech sound and literacy development. Before the activities begin remind children of the things that a good listener does e.g. keep quiet, have ears and eyes ready. Use visual reminders or gestures e.g. a finger to the lips, a hand cupping an ear alongside spoken language.

Use these activity ideas flexibly in any area of provision as well as during group sessions.

All activities will help children work towards achieving the EYFS Early Learning Goals:

- **Language for Communication**

  'Sustain attentive listening, respond to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions'

- **Dispositions and Attitudes**

  'Maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate'

Attention and listening activities

Turn-taking games

Works towards developing Personal, Social and Emotional Development Early Learning Goal 'work as part of a group or class, taking turns, sharing fairly'.

Sit in a circle and take turns to:

a) Roll a ball or pass a toy around the group from one to another. Older children could say their name or what their favourite food is etc, when it is their turn

b) Take turns to complete the construction of something, e.g. a jigsaw, brick tower, Mr Potato Head

c) Pass a clap, hand squeeze etc, round the circle

d) Take turns to copy an action round the circle e.g. wave your hand

Ready, Steady, Go

During an activity e.g. building a tower, a child must wait for 'go' before knocking it down or a child pinches an inflated balloon and lets go when they hear 'go'.

Other examples would be:

- When playing with a click clack track. Put your hands over the top of the track to prevent the child dropping the car too soon. The child must wait for 'go' before releasing the car down the track.
- Using musical instruments, the children have to wait for 'go' until they can play their instruments. Increase the length of time the children have to wait for 'go'.

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Action songs and stories

- Enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Linking Sounds and Letters, 30-50 months)
- Listen to stories with increasing attention and recall
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)

Encourage the children to sit in a group and join in with the songs or stories. Pause before the ends of sentences and wait for the children to fill the gaps, e.g. "The wheels on the…….. (bus)" or "We're going on a …….. (Bear hunt)"

When singing songs such as 'Sleeping Bunnies' try and increase the length of time the children have to 'wait' before jumping up.

Rhyming bags

- Enjoy rhyme and rhythmic activity
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Linking Sounds and Letters, 30-50 months)

Have a bag of objects or pictures which represent rhyming songs e.g. a bobbin for 'wind the bobbin up' or a star for 'twinkle twinkle little star'. Children take it in turns to choose any object or picture out of the bag and the group then sing that song.

Listening walks (DFES letters and sounds)

- Take pleasure in making and listening to a wide variety of sounds
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 8-20 months)

This can take place both indoors and outdoors. Talk about the different sounds you can hear and make a list or drawing of all the sounds the children can remember.

Animal antics

- To encourage young children to explore and imitate sound
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Linking Sounds and Letters, 16-26 months)

Put a selection of familiar animal toys or pictures in the middle of the group. Make the sound one of the animals makes and get the children to take turns to find it.

Variation: the group can imitate the animals action e.g. jump like a frog, act like a monkey, slither like a snake, plod around like an elephant swinging your trunk etc. This activity works well outside! Introduce the idea of loud and quiet sounds through the animals e.g. quiet as a mouse, loud as a lion.

Musical bumps/statues

- Able to stop and combine and repeat a range of movements
  (Physical Development: Movement and Space, 22-30 months)

Everyone dances or moves to the music. When the music stops sit down or stand still as quickly as you can. Using musical mats or cushions is good too – like musical chairs but this defines the space the child has to sit on.

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Hear the beat

- Tap out simple repeated rhythms and make some up
  (Creative Development: Creating Music and Dance, 30-50 months)
- Create sounds by banging, shaking, tapping or blowing
  (Creative Development: Creating Music and Dance, 22-36 months)

Using shakers, drums etc to make two or three sounds in a sequence to be copied by the group.

Variations:

- Use different rhythms and loud or soft, long or short beats
- Use different instruments or create your own, using pots and pans, spoons etc
- Can the children wait for 'go' and then 'stop' when asked?
- Can each child make a sequence for the group to copy?

Follow-the-leader

- Give children clear directions and help them to deal with those involving more than one action 'clap your hands, then stamp your feet'
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)

Sit in a circle. The leader asks the group to carry out simple actions e.g. clap your hands, stamp your feet, nod your head etc. You could also ask individual children to carry out actions when hearing their name.

Variations:

- Children take turns to choose the next action
- Change actions more quickly
- Link two or more actions together

Sound lotto

- Take pleasure in making and listening to a wide variety of sounds
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 8-20 months)

Make your own or use a commercial package. You will need a CD (or a creative voice!) with a number of different sounds on and some matching pictures for each child. When a child hears a sound they put a counter on to the matching picture.

Variations:

- To make the activity easier use very different sounds
- To make it harder use similar sounds or increase the number they have to listen for

Mrs Browning has a box (DFES Letters and Sounds)

Make up a box with 4-6 familiar noisy items e.g. crisp packet, keys, squeaky toy. Sing to the tune of 'Old McDonald' using your own name or names of the children playing.

'Mrs….. has a box, Ee i ee i o, and in that box she has a ……..' STOP gesture and ask the children to listen. Out of the children's sight, use one of the objects and see if anyone can guess what it is.

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Language

Comprehension/receptive/understanding of language: the ability to understand communication from others, such as speech, gestures, or sign language.

Expression/expressive language: the ability to produce language in any of a number of different ways such as speech or sign.

The activities below are graded in levels of difficulty using a 'key word level' approach based on the Derbyshire Language Scheme (Mark Masidlover, 1982).

Within the Derbyshire Language Scheme when referring to comprehension or understanding of language: a key word is a word a child has to understand to follow an instruction (it does not mean the actual number of words in a sentence e.g. 'where's the cat?' is only 1 key word understanding – 'cat' even though the phrase consists of three actual words).

However this is different during expressive activities and you **do** count the number of words a child actually says e.g. 'my black cat' would be a 3 word level utterance. Every word is counted up to four words – then grammar is used to evaluate the expressive level.

A one word level activity is the simplest and should be suitable for the youngest members of the group (approximately 2 years). Two word level activities are appropriate for 2 to 3 year olds. Most children will be able to follow at least a three word level instruction in their 3rd year and understand a wide variety of concepts.

For more information on the Derbyshire Language Scheme, practitioners are encouraged to attend a 3 day workshop available from Leeds SLT Training team. Shorter courses/refresher training are available. If you have any difficulty carrying out the following activities booking on a course is strongly recommended.

Language Activities

Stories

- Show interest in stories, rhymes and songs *(Linking Sounds and Letters: Reading, 16-26 months)*
- Listen to and join in with stories and poems, one to one and also in small groups *(Communication Language and Literacy: Reading, 30-50 months)*
- Begin to be aware of the way stories are structured *(Communication Language and Literacy: Reading, 30-50 months)*

How to use stories to develop understanding of language

Choose books related to your chosen topic/theme. Tell the story and talk about the objects, actions, descriptions, feelings, what will happen next.

Younger children can turn the pages, open flaps and guess what might be coming next. Lift the flap or move the pop-up feature or point to an item on the page and name it using simple language e.g. 'Wow……..a monkey' or 'It's a…….car'

Older children can comment/retell parts of the story, e.g. "The Hungry Caterpillar", "We're going on a Bear Hunt", "Each Peach Pear Plum".

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Use props, visual clues e.g. gesture/mime and encourage the children to join in. This is great for increasing attention and will make the story come alive. Repeat the same story over several sessions so the children learn to anticipate what's coming next and understand the vocabulary in the story.

Stories work towards developing Early Learning Goal in Communication Language and Literacy: Reading 'show an understanding of the elements of a story, such as main character, sequence of events and openings and how information can be found in non fiction texts to answer questions about where, who, why and how'.

Dialogic Book Talk

- A group activity in which adult and children together develop shared understanding of a book through talk

The practitioner chooses a book carefully e.g. 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. Vocabulary in the story is looked at prior to reading the story to the children through activities e.g. 'moon', 'sun', 'caterpillar', 'butterfly' and 'foods'.

The book is then read several times over a period of time and the children are encouraged to answer questions such as 'I wonder why…?' rather than direct questioning 'why does…?'

Follow up activities/experiences are continued around the story and linked to the child's own experiences.

Songs

- Respond to words and interactive rhymes such as 'clap hands' *(Communication Language and Literacy: Reading, 8-20 months)*
- Move their whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat *(Creative Development: Creating Music and Dance, 8-20 months)*
- Singing songs and action rhymes… should be an every day event *(DFES Letters and Sounds, 2007)*

Using songs to develop expressive language

Sing songs that rhyme, repetitive songs, silly songs, made up songs, and songs with actions e.g. 'this is the way we wash our hands, brush our teeth' etc.



Use songs appropriate to areas of provision e.g. Miss Polly had a dolly in the role play area or as events occur e.g. 'It's Raining, it's Pouring' during wet weather.

When you sing one of these songs stop before a main word e.g. sing 'Twinkle twinkle little ……' And wait. Will the child put in the word star? If they do, smile and continue. Allow more and more gaps in the songs for the child to sing the words.

These activities work towards developing Early Learning Goal in Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication 'listen with enjoyment and respond to stories, songs and other music, rhymes and poems and make up their own stories, songs, rhymes and poems'.

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Pop it in the Post

- Use a widening range of words to express or elaborate ideas
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)
- Use simple statements… often linked to gestures
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)
- Use vocabulary focussed on objects and people
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)

Make or buy a post box. Gather a selection of pictures or photos relating to your topic or theme. You need to begin by doing this activity as an understanding task to ensure the children know the vocabulary before they are expected to say it or at the beginning of a block of sessions.

Word Level	Understanding	Expression
One	Spread pictures of objects e.g. food out in the middle of the group To make it harder have a selection of pictures showing people carrying out actions e.g. eating, drinking The children take turns to select the named picture and post it in the box e.g. 'where's the apple?' or 'find who's eating'	The child chooses/is given a picture card and names/describes it before posting e.g. 'cake' or 'drinking' If the child does not spontaneously name it, then adult prompts with 'what is it?' or 'what are they doing?'
Two	To make this into 2WL task you need to use various action photos/pictures of boys and girls carrying out the same task e.g. choose four pictures of a boy running, girl running, boy jumping, girl jumping. Spread the pictures out in the middle of the group The children take turns to find the correct picture and post it in the box e.g. 'the girl running'	The child chooses an action picture card and describes it before posting e.g. 'boy jumping' (model correct grammatical form e.g. 'yes the boy is jumping') If the child does not spontaneously name it, then adult prompts with 'what are they doing?' If the child only provides part of the answer e.g. 'boy' then cue the child in by saying 'yes the boy's…'

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Follow the Leader

- Enjoy finding their nose, eyes or tummy as part of naming games
  (Problem Solving and Reasoning: Numbers as Labels for Counting, 8-20 months)
- Respond to simple instructions
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Development Matters, 30-50months)

An adult gives instructions for the children to follow:

Word Level	Understanding	Expression
One	Ask the children to follow one instruction e.g. 'everybody touch your head' (knee, toes etc) OR 'Everybody jump' (hop, walk, skip etc)	Let each child have a turn at being the leader and shout out instructions for the others OR The practitioner carries out a movement/mime e.g. drinking/jumping and the children have to say what is happening
Two	Ask the children to touch a toy e.g. 'touch teddy's foot' OR Give an instruction for the child to carry out with a toy e.g. Make dolly sleep or make teddy run (you would need dolly and teddy out)	Encourage the children to take turns at describing what the person next to them is doing e.g. 'Nathan's jumping'

Feely Bag

Collect a range of objects, photos and pictures relating to the topic/theme you have chosen e.g. Autumn – gather leaves, conkers, photos of trees/weather, books etc. let the children take turns to explore, name and describe the items in the bag.

Variation: this could be turned into a matching game where children have to find items that are the same and different to theirs.

A child needs to be able to understand 3 key words in a sentence before working on concepts.

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Pretend Play

- Enjoy imaginative and role play with peers
  (Knowledge and Understanding of the World: Communities, 30-50 months)
- Begin to make-believe by pretending
  (Creative Development: Developing Imagination and Imaginative Play, 22-36 months)
- Engage in imaginative play and role-play based on their own first hand experiences
  (Development: Developing Imagination and Imaginative Play, 30-50 months)

Create pretend situations with large or miniature home-corner toys, e.g. shops, dinner time, getting dressed, birthday party, religious festivals, and tea party.

Word Level	Understanding	Expression
One	Give simple instructions throughout the above play situations. Use a range of types of words: **Objects:** A range of food items (e.g. banana, bread, pizza). Give simple instructions such as 'where is the banana?' **Actions:** Have a doll, cup, brush, banana and spoon (e.g. 'brush dolly's hair', 'make dolly drink')	Encourage the children to name the objects or actions being used during play e.g. 'dolly' 'banana' or 'drinking'
Two There are several different types of 2WL instructions. A range of examples is included. Replace dolly/ teddy with favourite characters in nursery Incorporate new skills into everyday activities where	**a) Person + Object** You will need teddy, dolly, 2 sets of hats and shoes (a set for each) 'Where's teddy's hat?' or 'put dolly's hat on?' **b) Object + Place** You will need a table, chair, cup, plate. Place all objects in front of child Ask the child to: 'put the cup on the chair' or 'put the plate on the table' **c) Object to Person** You will need items or pictures of food, teddy, dolly. Place all food items in front of child and sit dolly/teddy behind Ask the child to: 'give the apple to dolly' or 'give the biscuit to teddy' **d) Person + Action** You will need two toy characters	Encourage the children to describe the objects or action being used e.g. 'teddy's boots' or 'Bob's sleeping' Role reverse the activities or ask the child to give an instruction to a friend Alternatively ask the child to say what they have just done.

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Word Level	Understanding	Expression
possible, e.g. "Give the apple/milk to John/Asif	Ask the child to: 'make teddy jump' or 'make Bob sleep' **e) Action + Place** You will need a box, mat and chair Ask the child to perform different actions e.g. 'jump on the mat' or 'sit on the box'	
Three There are several different types of 3WL instructions. A range of examples is included. Replace dolly/ teddy with favourite characters in nursery	**a) Object + Preposition + Place** You will need toys e.g. cars, balls, books, table, chair, bed Ask the child to: 'put the ball under the chair' or 'put the car on the table' **b) Person + Action + Place** You will need Tigger, Bob the Builder, chair, bed Ask the child to: 'Make Tigger jump on the bed' or 'Make Bob stand on the chair' **c) Adjective + Object + Person** You will need big and little pairs of food items e.g. big and little banana, 2 puppets/characters Ask the child to: 'Give the big apple to Bob' or 'Give the little biscuit to Teddy'	Role reversal – make some cue picture cards to help the child to give an adult a three word level instruction e.g. a picture of the car under the table or Bob jumping on the bed Alternatively ask the child to say what they have just done.
Four There are several different types of 4WL instructions. A range of examples is included. Replace dolly/ teddy with favourite characters in nursery	**a) Object + Colour + Preposition + Place** You will need red and blue counters and red and blue pencils, an up turned box/ up turned cup Ask the child to: 'put the blue counter on the box' or 'put the red pencil under the cup' **b) Person + Action + Place + Size** You will need a man, elephant, pictures of big/little house and big/little car Ask the child to: 'Make the man jump to the big house' or 'Make the elephant run to the little car'	Role reversal – ask the child to give an adult a four word level instruction (you could use cue cards as described earlier as a way to help) Alternatively ask the child to say what they have just done.

Create pretend situations with large or miniature home-corner toys, e.g. shops, dinner time, getting dressed, birthday party, religious festivals, and tea party.

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Big / Little

- Are beginning to understand variation in size
  (Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy: Shape, Space and Measure, 22-36 months)

To introduce the concept of big and little - gather big and little pairs of objects e.g. big cup and little cup, big car and little car. Initially match and sort the big and little objects or toys into boxes or hoops before moving on to the following activities.

Word Level	Understanding	Expression
One	Ask children to show the 'big' or 'little' item e.g. when the adult is holding up a big and little cup	The practitioner holds up one item and the child says if it is big or little
Two	You will need a big and little car and a big and little spoon Ask children to find, e.g. 'the big car' 'the little spoon'	Encourage the child to tell the rest of the group what they are holding e.g. 'big car or a little spoon'
Three	In addition to the big/little pairs you will now also need 2 containers e.g. a bag and a box Ask a child to put either a big or little object in the bag or the box E.g. 'Put the big cup in the bag'	Encourage the children to take turns at describing what the person next to them has e.g. 'Mohammed's big cup'

Hide and Seek

Have a range of hiding places (e.g. bag, box and hat) and small toys. Encourage the children to take turns to close their eyes while the adult hides the toy 'under' one container.

While the child is trying to find the toy, model the word 'under'. 'Is it under the hat', 'Is it under the box' When the child finds the toy encourage them to say where it is.

Swap roles the child now has a turn to hide the toy for another child.

For expression give forced alternative e.g. 'is it under the hat or under the box?'

Variation:

- Once the children understand and use under, introduce other position words 'in', 'on', 'behind', 'in front', 'next to'.
- Make an obstacle course and encourage children to go 'in' 'on' 'under' 'behind' pieces of equipment.

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What, Who, Where, Why?

- Question why things happen and give explanations
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)

Use pictures, books, photos, events in nursery. Model and encourage understanding and use of question words. Children take turns to answer the questions e.g. 'Where's the dog?', 'Who's riding a bike?', 'What is the boy doing?' or 'Why is the boy crying?'

Variation:
Use specific pictures of broken leg, flat tyre, fire etc and ask 'who will fix it?' - matching to picture of doctor, mechanic, fireman

When children are competent at these early question words, move on to the concept of 'why', e.g. talking about cause and effect.

What's next?

- Provide practical experiences that encourage children to ask and respond to questions
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)
- Use talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language For Thinking, 30-50 months)

Use photos, simple stories, action cards, why/because pictures. Talk about what is happening and why and get the children to guess what will come next.

During nursery activities e.g. when setting the table for lunch, ask the children if they know what is going to happen next.

Fun With Feelings

- Support children's growing ability to express a wide range of feelings orally and talk about their own experiences *(Personal Social Emotional Development: Self confidence, 40-60 months)*
- Use talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language For Thinking, 30-50 months)

- Use characters or puppets to act out simple scenarios, e.g. falling over, getting their favourite food, having a toy taken off them or going in a dark tunnel.
- Talk about how they are feeling. Practise making 'happy', 'sad', 'cross' or 'scared' faces.
- Get the children to talk about what makes them feel these emotions.
- You can also use books, pictures, photos of different situations or events to talk about feelings.

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Vocabulary activities

- Use vocabulary focussed on objects and people that are of particular importance to them
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language For Communication 30-50 months)
- Learn new words very rapidly and are able to use them in communicating about matters which interest them
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language For Communication 22-36 months)
- Working towards developing Early Learning Goal 'extend their vocabulary, explore the meanings and sounds of new words
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language For Communication)

Magic Box

Put a selection of toys/objects from around nursery relating to your topic in a bag. Sit in a circle and take turns to take out an object out of the box.

Word Level	Understanding	Expression
One	Take turns to find a named object and put it in the feely box e.g. 'where's the **cup**?'	Take turns to choose an object from the box and name it e.g. '**teddy**'

Variation:

Make a parcel with a toy wrapped in each layer. Support the child to unwrap a layer when it is their turn and talk about what they have got.

Where do I belong?

- Extend vocabulary, especially by grouping or naming
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 40-60 months)
- Extend vocabulary, especially by grouping or naming
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 40-60 months)

Have a range of objects/pictures from a few different categories e.g. animals, food, clothes. Have an area e.g. with a picture of a farm scene, shopping basket or washing line etc to distinguish categories. The children takes turns to decide on where the item belongs. You can also use this activity as a follow up to trips and activities e.g. following a trip to the supermarket get the children to help set up a shop and decide which items should go in or use photos and decide which you can buy at the supermarket and which you can't.

Variation:
For older children support them to sort items into sub categories
e.g. **food → fruit or vegetables OR animals → farm or zoo**

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Who's in the box?

- Build up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication, 30-50 months)

Have a box with a lid and fill it with a set of animal/transport toys. All the children sit in front of the box. Say the following rhyme before taking out each animal/vehicle and giving it to a child who has guessed what it is:

'Here is a box (point as you say)
Here is a lid
I wonder whatever inside it is
Why it's a…
(you make the sound of the animal/vehicle and the children shout out what they think it is)
Without any doubt
Shall I take off the lid and let it come out?'

What am I?

- Working towards developing Early Learning Goal 'extend their vocabulary, explore the meanings and sounds of new words
  (Communication Language and Literacy: Language for Communication)

Use a set of picture cards and let the children guess from a description of its look, feel, taste, and smell, what the picture is.

e.g. a picture of a ball - 'I'm round, bouncy and you can kick me'
a picture of toast - 'You can eat me for your breakfast with butter or jam on'.

With older children let them take turns at describing the picture cards.



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Useful resources

Retailers

- Winslow Press tel: 0845 230 2777 www.winslow-cat.com
- Early Learning Centre tel: 08705 352 352 www.elc.co.uk
- Orchard Toys tel: 0115 937 1611 www.orchardtoys.com
- LDA tel: 0845 120 4776 www.LDAlearning.com
- Black Sheep Press 01535 631 346 www.blacksheeppress.co.uk
- Clear Picture Resources www.clear-resources.co.uk

Resources for Activities

- Photos of objects, actions and opposites (commercial products are available e.g. Winslow Pocket Colourcards)
- Postbox / boxes / bags
- Puppets / familiar characters / teddies / dolls
- Musical instruments e.g. shakers, drums
- Home corner toys e.g. teasets, pretend food, clothes, small sized furniture
- Small world toys e.g. animals
- Sets of large and small objects / toys / pictures / photos
- Story / rhyme books
- Simple vocabulary / first word books
- Bubbles / balloons
- Bricks / beanbags
- Balls
- Jigsaws / inset puzzles
- Music CDs e.g. action rhymes
- Sound Lottos
- Rhyme bag – objects / pictures to represent songs e.g. toy bus for the wheels on the bus
- Echo microphones

Useful Websites

www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk
www.talkingpoint.org.uk
www.afasic.org.uk
www.twinkl.co.uk
www.speechteach.co.uk
www.ican.org (Look out for useful games and resources to order or download – 'ready steady talk' for younger children and 'The communication cookbook' for older children)
www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk
www.tes.co.uk

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How to get further information

The Leeds SLT Department offer a wide range of workshops for early years practitioners. Details of these workshops and how to book places can be found at **www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/cslt**

If none of the courses meet your full requirements please contact the administration team and our specialist trainers can speak with you to arrange a bespoke course.

Please contact the SLT admin team on **0113 305 5307 / 305 5308 / 305 5309** for more information.

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The National Strategies: Early Years, Inclusion Development Programme. Supporting children with Speech Language and Communication Needs: Guidance for Practitioners in the Foundation Stage. DFES (2008)

The Early Years Foundation Stage: Setting the standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five. DFES (2008)

Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practise of high quality phonics. Primary National Strategy, DFES (2007)

The National Strategies Early Years 1. Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners. DCSF (2008)

Confident, capable and creative: supporting boys' achievements: Guidance for practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Primary National Strategy (2007)

The National Strategies Early Years: Learning, Playing and Interacting: Good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2009)

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Planning and Progress Record Sheet (group)

Date: .....

Topic/theme: .....

Resources needed: .....

.....

Children: .....

Practitioner(s): .....

Observation/comments: .....

	Activity		EYFS			
Attention and Listening Activity						
Language Activity 1 (Understanding)						
Language Activity 2 (Expressive/ Vocabulary)						
Next steps (future planning) or ideas to carry over into areas of provision/home						

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Planning and Progress Record Sheet (group) - example

Date: August 2011

Topic/theme: Animals

Resources needed: rhyming bag, magic box, toys and pictures of animals, animal action cards, post box

Children: Abdul, Abi, Kasper, Chantelle

Practitioner(s): Helen

Observation/comments:

	Activity	EYFS	Abdul	Abi	Kasper	Chantelle
Attention and Listening Activity	Rhyming bags (bag with objects/ pictures to represent familiar songs)	Enjoy rhyme and rhythmic activity' 30-50 months CLL: LSL	Waited for turn. Maintained eye contact and sat well. Joined in with all songs and copied actions.	Took turns with no prompting. Knew all actions to songs and could predict which word/action was next.	Needed lots of prompts to join in activity as distracted by own object (farmer). He joined in for favourite song 'Old MacDonald'.	Needed lots of physical and verbal prompts to sit and wait for her turn. Required adult support to carry out actions / choosing object from bag.
Language Activity 1 (Understanding)	Magic box (selection of animals and pictures of animals)	Respond to simple instructions' 30-50months CLL Development matters	Easily selected the animals when asked. Followed all 2 word level instructions.	Easily selected the animals and followed all 2 word level instructions.	Needed prompts to listen. Able to find 2 animals (dog and sheep).	Needed adult support to sit and join in. Not able to select any animals on request – just wanted to take all animals out of box!
Language Activity 2 (Expressive/ Vocabulary)	Pop It in the Post (photo cards of animals and a set of them carrying out an action e.g. a cow sleeping, a horse jumping etc)	Use simple statements… Often linked to gestures 30-50 CLL:LFC	Easily named and described all animal cards using 2-3 word phrases e.g. that doggy sleeping, bunny jumping up.	Named most animal cards but didn't know snake, butterfly and goat. Using 2 word phrases to describe pictures e.g. 'cat eating'	Needed prompts to listen. Able to make the animals sounds for cat, dog, horse, chicken and jumped himself when he saw the photo of the horse jumping.	Needed adult support to sit and join in. Not able to name any animals on request but enjoyed posting them in the box and copied child saying 'woof'.
Next steps (future planning) or idea to carry over into areas of provision/home			Good role model introduce 3 word level activities and harder animals vocab and sorting games.	Continue to extend animal vocab and sorting games. Advice to parents re: animal vocab and follow up in small world area.	Develop basic animal vocab and extend attention and listening in setting. Focus on animal action rhymes at group time.	Requires specific IEP targets – liaise with SLT.

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Planning and Progress Record Sheet (per child)

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6
Attention and Listening Activity	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments
Language Activity 1 (Understanding)	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments
Language Activity 2 (Expressive / Vocabulary)	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments	Activity EYFS Comments

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Follow up ideas for home sheet

Your child has been taking part in a language group. The group has been focusing on developing communication skills such as attention and listening skills, understanding and use of language.

The topic we have been focusing on is…

The words we have been learning are…

Activities to try at home

It would be helpful if you can carry out any of the activities above and talk about the topic words whilst out and about, or with objects around your home, toys, books etc. Please ask if you require any resources or further ideas.

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Example language group session plan

Session topic: food

- **Turn taking game**
- **Equipment needed:** ball

Sit in a circle and the children take turns to roll a ball the ball to eachother. Older children can say the name of the child they are going to roll it to.

Model language such as 'it's my turn', 'now its Adam's turn'.

- **Pretend play**
- **Equipment needed:** doll, teddy, toy food, box

Present the box of food to the children. Before you carry out this activity encourage the children to look at all of the items in the box. Talk about each one of the food items.

1 word level

Ask the children to find items of food e.g. 'where's the apple?', 'who can find the banana?'

The children can then take it in turns to feed a character.

1 word level

Give the cake to teddy (when only teddy is available)

2 word level

Give the banana to dolly (when teddy and dolly are both available)

- **Pop it in the Post**
- **Equipment needed:** post box, pictures of food

Spread pictures of food e.g. food out in the middle of the group To make it harder have a selection of pictures showing people carrying out actions e.g. eating, drinking The children take turns to select the named picture and post it in the box e.g. 'where's the apple?' or 'find who's eating'

Song: Five currant buns

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