



Communicating Kids – 3 years plus

By 3 years old we would typically see children showing awareness of and interest in adults and other children. They should be able to understand and follow daily routines and instructions, and be putting words together to ask for things, answer questions and tell people about things.

Social Communication

At this age children are often joining in and initiating play with other children and engaging in more imaginative play and role play. Sharing and turn taking can still be tricky but children should be developing their skills in managing these things (with reduced adult support). They should show increasing attention skills across this year, but still find it hard to concentrate for long periods of time or on more than one thing at a time.

Language

Understanding: By 3 years old children should be able to understand 2 part instructions- “put your cup on the table”- and be progressing to understand longer instructions or information- “put the big car in the box”. They should be developing skills in listening to longer stories and be able to answer questions about what they have heard. Understand of concepts such as colour and size should be emerging.

Expressing themselves : At this age children may be putting more words together to make longer sentences and linking ideas using “and” and “because”. They might be asking more questions and starting to talk about things in the past and the future – expect grammatical errors like “I eated my cake”.

Speech

By 3 years old we would expect parents and carers to be able to understand most of what a child is saying (although not absolutely everything). We would expect children to be able to use the earlier sounds (p, b, m, w, n, h) by the age of 3, with many children of this age also using t, d, g and k. The sounds s, f and y may still be tricky but should appear more in a child's speech as they near 4 years old.

Later developing sounds (r, l, z, v, th, sh, ch and j) might start emerging in a child's speech from 3, however it is not uncommon children to still be developing these sounds in the first few years of school (up to about 7).



What can adults do?

- *Model good talking at the right level for your child*- join in with your child's play and talk about what they are saying and doing – don't ask lots of questions or overload them with information.
- *Use pictures* – if your child finds it hard to remember routines, plans and instructions using pictures can support them.
- *Give time*– set aside time to talk with your child each day to help with their learning- give them time to process what you have said, think about their response and say it.
- *Reduce their frustration*– when you can't understand put the blame on you and not your child – “I'm sorry mummy/daddy's ears aren't working today can you tell me again?”. Tell them what you have understood and support them getting their message across- “are you telling me something about nursery or home?”.
- Avoid correcting your child's speech and instead remodel (repeat) the word back so they can hear how it should sound.

Try this... Make it a game

The more fun it is, the more they want to do it.. the more they do it, the better they get.

- Active games- play Simon says to practise action words, explore big/little things outside eg jump in big/ little puddles.
- Transport games- practise listening to instructions eg “put the bus on the road”.
- Dolls and teddies- play ordering food to practise listening to instructions and using sentences.
- Listening games – link a sound and an action- eg when you hear a bell jump up and down, when you hear a drum sit down. Listening skills are important for speech development, and for attention skills.
- Syllable clapping- put interesting objects or pictures in a bag, pull them out, show your child and clap the syllables in the word – “boun-cy-ball”- then play with it. This helps children to slow down and break words up into smaller chunks and to store them in their vocabulary more accurately. It is a really important skill for children developing speech and it also helps to support later reading and writing development.

Make up games to target your child's speech, language and social communication skills, using things that interest them.

Disclaimer

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