

TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

Pacing and pausing	Shows children we're listening; models turn taking; allows processing time; supports active participation.
Commenting	Allows children to take the conversation in the direction of their thinking and ensures we're not asking questions they already know the answer to.
Asking open questions	Supports thinking, especially higher order questions like why and how.
Responding	to what the children say – it is important to acknowledge what they have said and build on their ideas. Essential for language learning and emotional development.
Adding and extending	the children's language – shows we're listening; provides clear models of language; builds from their starting point; important for language development.
Making it meaningful	Relating new words or ideas to the children's own lives helps to contextualise new ideas and supports retention.
Following	the child's lead – supports development of language, conversation and learning.
Considering levels	of language – adapting our language ensures children can access, process and respond.

For children who are struggling, it is important that adults:

- **Know children's language levels** and communicate with them responsively, pitching language at the appropriate level and following their lead.
- Are aware of **language loads** – for example:
 - decontextualised language can be more challenging than concrete, *here and now* language;
 - long sentences can be difficult to process;
 - grammatically complex sentences are more difficult to understand;
 - asking questions multiple times or rephrasing can be challenging.
- Find ways to **check children's understanding**, recognise whether they do or don't understand and know how to seek clarification if needed.
- Know how to **simplify language**, keeping it concrete and using lots of visual support if needed.
- Know how to **provide structures** for oral sentence and narrative building to help those children with expressive language needs.
- Provide **facilitated practice** of conversations that can build confidence with interaction.
- **Understand** that children can struggle with any or all aspects of language learning, and may need these taught explicitly.