

Tips for talking: children aged 4 to 5 years

Here are some simple ideas to encourage children around this stage:

- **Play simple games (like board games, lotto games and ‘Simon says’) that involve taking turns.** This not only helps your child develop this skill, it also helps him listen and attend to an activity for longer periods of time.
- **Ask fewer questions to encourage your child to talk more about his experiences.** Use comments and Encourage your child to talk without being questioned. Lots of questions we ask children are often easily answered with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Open questions like “what are you going to play with today?” or “why is the boy wearing a scarf?” will encourage your child to say more than ‘yes’ and ‘no’. If your child finds it difficult to answer such open-ended questions, it might help to start off by giving him a couple of choices. For example, you could say ‘Are you going to play with the cars or the farm animals?’.
- **Introduce your child to new and varied words and phrases.** Don’t forget, although your child may know lots of different words, his language is still developing. Introduce new words to your child in everyday settings. Read to your child and talk about the story. Having fun with words or rhymes can help children learn skills they need for reading and developing literacy. By learning the differences and similarities between word sounds, a child builds the foundations for reading and writing.
- **Give your child time to think without answering for him or finishing off his sentences.** Your child may need time to think about things that he has heard or done before answering or responding to questions and instructions. Try to encourage him in his responses by showing him you are listening to what he is saying. Correct any grammatical errors by repeating back correctly, for example: “I eated my snack” “yes, you *ate* your snack.”

For further information please contact your local Speech and Language Therapy Department.