Early Childhood AUSTRALIA INC.
... voice for young children

Everyday learning about

Vol.3 Number 1

Talking

Julie Campbell

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About the author

Julie Campbell has been involved in early childhood education since 1974 when she joined the staff of Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College. Having studied psycholinguistics at the University of London, she was able to pursue this interest in teaching, writing and research on young children's language. This was combined with an interest in young children with additional needs and she published in this area as well. In 1992, Julie was a co-founder of an exemplary early intervention program, KU Starting Points, and currently maintains her involvement in this field as Chairman of Possum Children's Services in the Blue Mountains. Since 2003, she has combined part-time teaching of early childhood students at the University of Western Sydney with doctoral research.

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About Early Childhood Australia

Early Childhood Australia Inc., formerly known as the Australian Early Childhood Association, was established in 1938. Early Childhood Australia works with Government, early childhood professionals, parents, other carers of young children, and various lobby groups to secure the best range of options and outcomes for children as they grow and develop.

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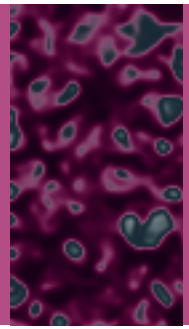


Contents

The *Everyday learning series* has been developed to focus attention on the everyday ways in which children can be supported in their growth and development. It is for all those who are involved in children's development and learning, including early childhood professionals in all children's services, parents, grandparents and others with an ongoing responsibility for young children.

The first years of life are the foundation for all later growth, development and learning.

- Early experiences set the pattern for all later learning.
- Early experiences and relationships affect how children feel about themselves, how they get on with other people and how they join in and enjoy life.
- Every experience has an impact. Babies and young children are learning all the time, regardless of whether we think we are 'teaching' them.

Research has shown that a strong foundation in these years starts children on the pathway to:

- being able to relate confidently and effectively with others;
- mental and emotional health; and
- making the most of each child's abilities in education.

Babies and young children are learning all the time.

This research also shows us what kinds of experiences and relationships babies and young children need, to get the best start for living and learning.

What matters is how they are learning and what they are learning. Learning takes place in relationships. If the earliest relationships are warm and loving, babies and young children have the best chance to make the most of the opportunities in their worlds.

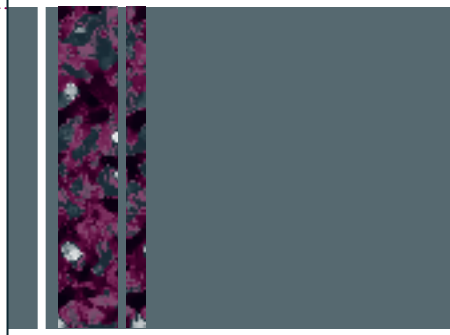
To learn best they need parents and carers (their first teachers) who:

- are warm and caring;
- know each baby or child very well and appreciate what is special about them;
- take time to understand the child's messages (cues) and to respond to them with encouragement, praise, comfort, independence and rest as needed; and
- are able to see, share and celebrate the big and small joys and achievements of the children in their care.

There is no set list of things to teach babies and young children.

Living is learning and children learn through living. These books are a guide to how young children learn and how best to help them at the different stages of early childhood. All children and babies have their own abilities and interests.

Adults watch and listen and provide opportunities and support to build on each child's strengths. Babies and children also come from family and cultural backgrounds that are part of the way they are and need to be included in their experiences.



Babies

Talk is important right from the start

Children are born ready to love and ready for talk. They begin to learn about their family and they begin to listen to what we say. Our first 'conversations' with babies are very simple: just about them, how special they are and how we love them. We talk about how gorgeous and snuggly and bright-eyed and beautiful they are.

'Look at baby Rachel,' says her grandmother. 'She looks as though she understands everything you say!'

The baby may not understand the words, but even at three days old she knows her mother's voice. She looks intently at her mother's face. Familiar faces will be the most interesting things to look at for the next three months. Watch a baby as her mother talks. Her arms wave, her feet kick, she gurgles, smiles, and makes funny faces. Of course we talk back as if the baby understands, taking turns just as we do in a conversation. What are babies learning from this? Not the words, but the fun and love that go with being talked to, of joining in the 'conversation'.

Learning about language doesn't need 'lessons', but it does need talk. Talk while changing nappies, talk at picking up and settling for sleep, talk at bath-time, talk while getting baby dressed and lifting her into the car seat or pram. Saying 'Up, up, up' as we lift the baby up helps her to predict what is going to happen and makes her world more secure. This also provides a link between actions and words. We are not teaching words so much as showing how talk is part of what we do every day, and babies listen and respond, showing that they have learned the first important rule. Talking is about us being together.

What we do as caregivers is very important right from the start. In the first two years, before children are talking a great deal, they are listening and learning about what language is and what language does.

Recent research tells us that the number of words children know depends on the amount of talk they are involved in **before** they turn three. After the age of three, the talkative children go on to do better at preschool and school, but the children who have very few words seldom pick up this ability and are less able to take advantage of good preschool programs. So what happens early on in 'conversations' makes a difference that may last for life.

Babies get to know their family voices

The babbling sounds babies make seem to be very similar, whatever the language spoken by the family, but this begins to change. At about age six months babies begin to 'tune in' to the sounds of the family language. Their sounds will be more and more like the sounds they hear in the talk around them. This is an important way of being part of the family.

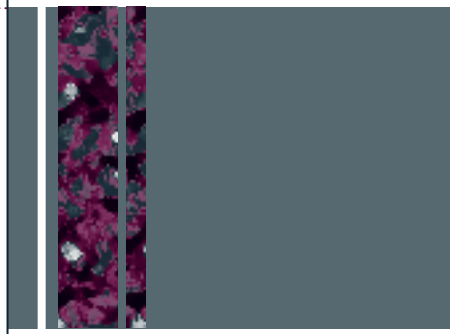
' Listen to Pete! He's telling off the dog, just like you did this morning.' Pete isn't using words, but he is using the same kind of expression and gesture.

Sitting up, looking around and joining in

As soon as babies can sit up they are able to see a whole lot more, and the world around them opens up. Sitting up goes with being able to play with toys. So now we have lots of things to talk about.

We know all the words, but babies show us what they are interested in. They lead the 'conversation' by pointing or holding out something for us to see.

At nine months Annie couldn't say, 'I can see Daddy outside', but she could point and bounce up and down with excitement. She pointed to the window and then looked to see if we were looking there too. This is an important part of sharing attention, with both baby and caregiver looking and talking about the same thing.



Books are another way to play this pointing and naming game. Babies love to see a picture with eyes, so pictures of animals or children are fascinating. Let the baby touch the picture and then turn the page. This isn't the time to read the story; that can come later. To begin with, looking at the picture together, naming and describing is enough. ('Look at the boy. He's got boots on.'). Sturdy books with clear, simple pictures are best.

When we talk to babies, we use some words over and over again and these words become part of regular routines. At bathtime and mealtimes we talk about faces and bodies. 'Open your mouth, close your eyes, hold out your hand, where's your nose, let's wipe your chin, over your head, socks on your toes.' We also use words and gestures for social occasions: 'Wave bye-bye. Blow a kiss.'

Babies can use gestures before they use words. As well as pointing and offering, we see arms stretched up for 'pick me up', hands opening and closing for 'I want some', pushing away for 'no', and of course, hugs and kisses.

As well as the regular routines, there are lots of games to play. Here are some that might be like ones you know.

Hiding games:	Peek-a-boo Where's it gone?
Clapping games:	Pat-a-cake Clap hands clap hands 'til Daddy comes home
Surprise games:	I'm gonna get you This is the way the lady rides
Tickling games:	This little piggy went to market Round and round the garden

(See E.Martin,1999, *Baby Games*)

For some children these are wildly exciting, so you might also need some calming down games. For others, the 'surprise' might be too scary, so a very gentle lead-up is a good idea.

In a new situation babies learn from watching us. When we are upset or disapproving, this gets noticed. Annie found a little hole in the cushion and began to pull out the stuffing, looking up at her mother for a response. *'Is this meant to come out?'*

This kind of checking also happens for new or scary situations. *'Can I go in here? Is it OK for this person to pick me up?'*

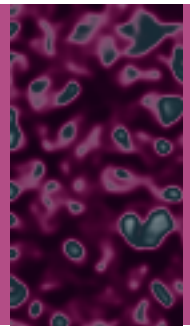
This is where social rules are being set up; rules about safety ('Don't touch, hot'), rules about caring ('Nice kitty'), rules about what counts as enough and no more ('Gone, bikkies all gone').

First words

At the end of the first year so much is happening in children's lives. From being little babies, they have become active, noisy, sociable explorers. All this time their caregivers have been doing most of the talking and babies have been leading the 'conversation' with just about everything but words. At the same time, they have learned a lot about what words are and they can understand about 50 words before they start to talk.

The easiest sounds for babies to make are just like words we want to hear. *Mama, dada, papa, baba, nana* are used by children all over the world, making their families very happy. Other first words, not surprisingly, are words that parents have been using all along, so now the children start to use them too.

First words are names and actions. There are words such as 'drink' and 'toast', 'more' and 'gone', and words such as 'cuddle' and 'mine' and 'down'. While first words may be those you use yourself, when children use them they do so in their own way, not just as copycats. Some first words are all their own invention and some first sentences, just two or three words together, are not at all like the sentences adults use. 'My do it!', 'Want bikkie', 'Allgone horsie'.



Toddlers

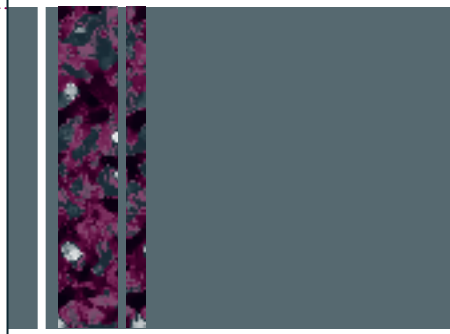
Toddlers: One word leads to another

The more words children use before the age of 20 months, the more words they will continue to add to their language. The children who are good talkers have a lasting advantage through their ability to use new words as well as old ones. To begin with, caregivers provided the words and the meanings when the babies showed what they were interested in. Now there is a change for caregivers as well as a change for children. Children can use the words they want to, and they want someone to talk to. Conversations now sound more like a balance between two speakers, each taking turns.

Pete is eating his cereal and gets to the picture at the bottom of the bowl.
Pete: Bunny rabbit.
Jenny (his mother): Bunny rabbit in the bowl, yeah.
Pete: Cockatoo.
Jenny: Cockatoo? Well, it's actually a goose, but it looks like a cockatoo, yeah, but it's a goose.

Whether geese are like cockatoos is not really a big deal. What is important is that here Pete and his mother are talking about what they see and what name it should have. This is how one word leads to another at dozens of different opportunities during the day. Children like Pete expect to get answers, and that is how they get to use more and more words.

But children can also make one word do a lot of work. Ella liked the word Mum. She pointed out a student riding a bike. 'Look, another mum.' Jonah called all animals 'woof,' not worried at all that this included cats, cows and camels. Rebecca, on the other hand, got very upset when a bottle was given to a visiting baby. 'Bollie', she thought, meant her bottle alone. Which names are general and which names are special? This is a hard job for a toddler to sort out.



Twenty questions

Asking questions is a good way to find out and it can also be a fascinating game. 'What's that?' is a question adults use when looking at pictures with children, so the children know how to use it in just the same way. George was sitting in the back of the car while his grandfather was driving.

George: Grandpa, what's that little thing?

Grandpa: What little thing do you mean?

George: The little shiny thing.

After several questions and answers, 'the little thing' was identified. It is hard for children to understand that in this situation the adult cannot see what they see, nor turn away from watching the traffic. Sometimes we don't know the answer and sometimes we can't understand the question. Children need to know when you need more information and then, as George did, they will tell you a bit more.

First questions are just statements with a rising intonation ('Bikkie?'). *What* and *where* come next, then *why* and *when*. Children who ask and answer questions are able to learn something new and share memories about the past.

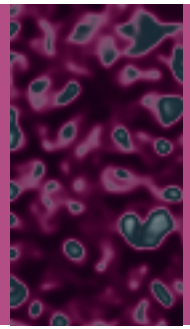
Sentences make sense

First sentences of two or three words don't sound like adult sentences, but we can usually work out what they mean. It is the meaning that is most important, not the correctness of the grammar. The English language has different ways of adding bits on to words or changing the order of words, and it takes time for children to work all that out.

Ryan: 'We wented to the swings and I goed down the slippy. Katie hurted her foots, so we bringed her home.'

Ryan can tell a good story and his mistakes with grammar happen because, while he is using all the rules, the words in this case don't fit the rules! English is tricky for beginners.

Between age two and three, many children become such good talkers that we stop thinking about them as needing any help. They simply talk along with the rest of the family or group. But there's still a lot to learn, and different experiences, such as starting preschool, bring new ideas and new words. In the first two years most children know similar words for everyday things, but this changes as individual children pick up on the new and interesting words they hear.



Preschoolers

Preschool: Talking, telling, taking turns

There is always a lot going on at preschool, and newcomers may find it bewildering. The language or languages that served them well at home or in small group care must now work for them in a setting where toys, adult attention, and routines such as mealtimes and toileting must be shared with many other children. New demands are made on how children talk. First they must be reporters, telling the family what happened during the day. This requires an understanding of what someone else needs to know about your experiences. Children begin to realise that parents are not mind-readers. Perhaps this is what leads to all those conversations that begin 'D'you know what?'

Children must also be reporters to their preschool caregivers and to other children. For example, giving information to listeners who don't know the dog's name, or any of the other references which are easy to understand in the home context and very difficult out of home. Here is Alex talking about his unnamed baby brother:

Alex: 'He still has a bottle. I don't have a bottle, because I am big and am at kindy.'

Telling others about important experiences is more likely to happen when there's no pressure to do so, and children can choose what to talk about. This is very different from telling 'news'. The activities in which children talk most to adults and to other children are where there are toys to share and ways of doing things to talk about. Here is Tom making pretend pizza with playdough:

Tom: 'I need to roll it out. I think I'll put on some ham. This is cheese sauce. Now we can put it in the oven. It's ready. Yum'.

As well as being reporters, children need to be diplomats and know how to use polite forms of language.

'Want juice' is fine from a toddler, but we expect more from preschoolers. Families vary in their emphasis on *please* and *thank you* and the formalities of greeting and farewell. What do we really want here? Constant nagging for *please* and *thank you* is not as important as being able to give and receive in a friendly way, is it?

Children also learn how to use indirect requests. These are all the ways we ask for something without sounding too bossy. *Would you mind?, could you?, how about?, why don't you?*, are ways to do this.

> *Jessica: 'I would like a piece of orange, please.'*
>
> *Jack: (loudly) 'Would you mind not shouting; I'm getting a headache.'*

We usually find out the hard way that, if we say, 'Would you like to tidy up?', Jessica or Jack may well say 'No', because an indirect request gives them that choice. Direct requests are still needed when there are no choices!

Empathy for the feelings of others can be seen very early with toddlers who will hug or pat an upset child, sometimes finding a toy for comfort. Adult actions and responses to distress are always noticed.

Matt heard a child crying and said, 'Never mind, your Mummy will come soon.'
(Matt was visually impaired, but could hear the need for comfort and was able to use the words he had heard the teacher use.)

Talking and thinking

When children talk and ask questions, we get some idea of what they know. It is always the case that they understand, and misunderstand, more than we realise. Through asking and answering questions we can clear up some confusions. Jack was quite sure that the fire engine started the fire so that the firefighters could put it out! It is particularly important to talk about misunderstandings that make children fearful and

worried. Concerns about bodily processes, bleeding, pain, toileting, what happens in hospital, and death are quite common. Children need real answers that will fit in with what they already know. What is real and what is pretend?

Katy's teacher was reading a story about a bunyip in which the bunyip talks about his life. 'How can he talk when he doesn't exist?' Katy asked. This was a serious question about existence and the meaning of life.

Talking and problem-solving go hand-in-hand. Listen for children explaining, using words such as *because, that's why, if* and *then*. These are the words that go with understanding cause and effect, but it can get muddled up.

Josie: 'I've got new shoes. That's why I'm five.'

Her teacher sorted it out. 'You've got new shoes because you're five and they look so good. Red shoes! My favourite colour.'

Josie then went on to say a lot more. Keeping the conversation going is very important. We also show that we expect an answer, but can wait (count up to 10, silently) so that children have the time to think about what they want to say.

Caregivers and teachers can find out a great deal by listening and taking the ideas just a little bit further 'So the dog got out the gate. What did you do then?' This is a real question because the adult doesn't know the answer and the child does. There are other questions, test questions, where the adult does know the answer. Belinda's teacher asked her what colour paint she was using. Belinda was amazed. 'Red, of course. Don't you know even that?' When colour names are talked about as part of the conversation, then the colour name describes a real item. Children know about colour differences before they know all the colour names. Using words such as pale blue, or bright red, or dark brown sometimes comes from having a set of coloured pencils or texta colours to share.

Words that describe how things look, move, sound and taste make talk more interesting and more accurate. Listen for new words and encourage children to use them even if they haven't quite got the meaning right. George said he was 'gobsmacked', Vicki described her Lego construction as 'only temporary', Daisy called her new outfit a 'midriff', and Andy said he had some bits of 'gravity' in his pocket. Ibrahim said his daddy was getting a new battery because the old one had 'deteriorated'.

There are many ways children can have fun with words. The first time children tell jokes, they get some parts right, but not always the punchline.
'Nana, this is a joke,' announced Charlie. 'Guess what. There's an elephant in the fridge!'

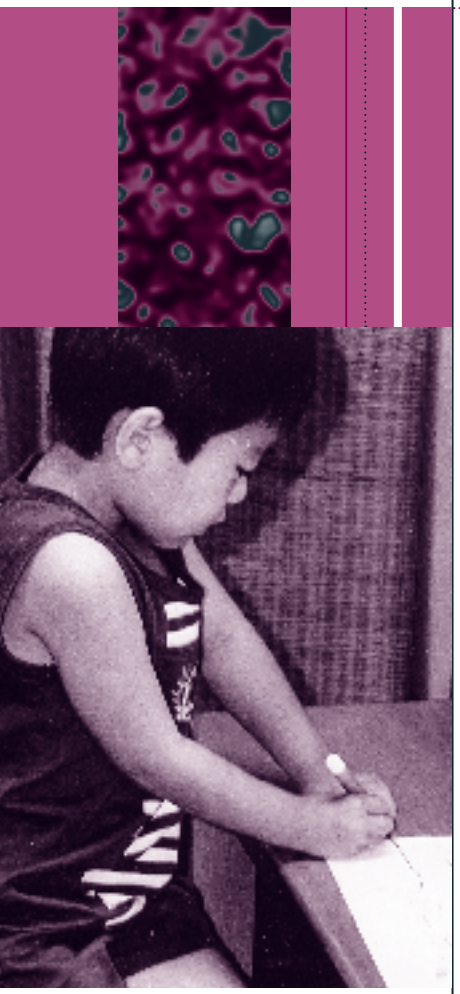
Nana has heard this before so inserts the punchline about the footprints in the jelly, but Charlie just loves the whole moment and laughs and laughs. It will take him a while to get the lines in the right order, but he understands the format.

Rhymes, songs, stories with repeat lines, and role-play are all rich ways to use words. Listen to the way children in dramatic play alter their voices to suit the part. Bianca and Hana told the scary monster with the gruff voice (George) that monsters don't live in houses. He accepted this and stomped off. They then played their parts as mother and baby.

Bianca the mother to Hana the baby: 'Mummy put sunblock on you?'

Hana: 'Goo-goo, goo-goo.'

If George had taken his role a bit further, with real threats, Bianca and Hana would have needed adult support, but they handled the first approach very well. Children who can use words easily are more confident in situations where they need to negotiate their share of space, more able to ask for adult help, and more likely to copy adult ways of solving conflict.



Words to read and write

Just as toddlers work out that things have names, children from two to three begin to work out that squiggly marks have meaning. Many children can recognise their own name and some will try writing it. Even if this is just the first letter of the name, it is a good start. Diagonal lines are hard to draw, so letters like A and V might have one vertical line and one diagonal. Amy liked to write her name starting at the right-hand side of the paper, so it looked like 'ymA'. Her dad put a red dot on the left-hand side to give her a starting point. English is written from left to right and top to bottom, but children learning Arabic, Japanese or Hebrew learn different rules.

Learning to read

Learning to read, like learning to talk, starts sooner than we realise and needs help for longer. Kelly's mother had noticed her writing what looked like her name at home. She asked the teacher if she was being shown how to write her name on paintings. The teacher said no, because Kelly was only three and not 'ready' to do this. Two weeks later a visiting student asked Kelly's mother if she knew that her daughter could read and write. Children can always surprise us!

Drawing with pens and pencils lends itself to trying out letter shapes and making pictures that tell a story in the detail that is not so easy with paint. Children see adults filling in forms and writing shopping lists, so some early attempts at writing are doing what adults do.

Programs with a language focus

We like to think that all preschool and group care programs help children's language to develop. Do they? How do we know?

The most important resources are adults who talk. Children's language develops every time someone talks with them in a conversation, not just 'that's nice', 'good girl' or 'time to pack up'. If we want to encourage talk, small groups are better than large groups, materials to share are better than one for each child, mealtimes and routines are ideal for chat, and dramatic play gets better if there is an adult nearby. Outdoor play is rich in opportunity to use words for skills and action: 'Watch me jumping', 'This is going to be a gi-normous hole'. Words like *up* and *down, under* and *through* make sense when they are part of the action.

Sometimes it is thought that cognitive or thinking skills can develop only if children are given inset puzzles to do. While puzzles provide for a type of problem-solving, the advance in learning comes when there's talk about how the pieces fit, where the picture matches, and how the whole process has a beginning and an end.

The benefits of story reading lie in what children contribute and what happens next. After reading a story like *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins, 1993), was it read again? Did the children predict what would happen? Did they know what a rake was and the jokes that go with it? What's a beehive? Is the book left out for them to look at and retrace the events? The language of a story is more formal than the language of talk. A story has a formal beginning and end and a sequence of events with a dramatic high point. It is told with sentences, questions, different characters talking, and cues in the pictures about what to expect. It can introduce new words and expressions such as 'Eureka!' Closing the book is never the end of a good story. If the program has a strong language focus you will know when and where the most talking and the most interesting talking takes place.

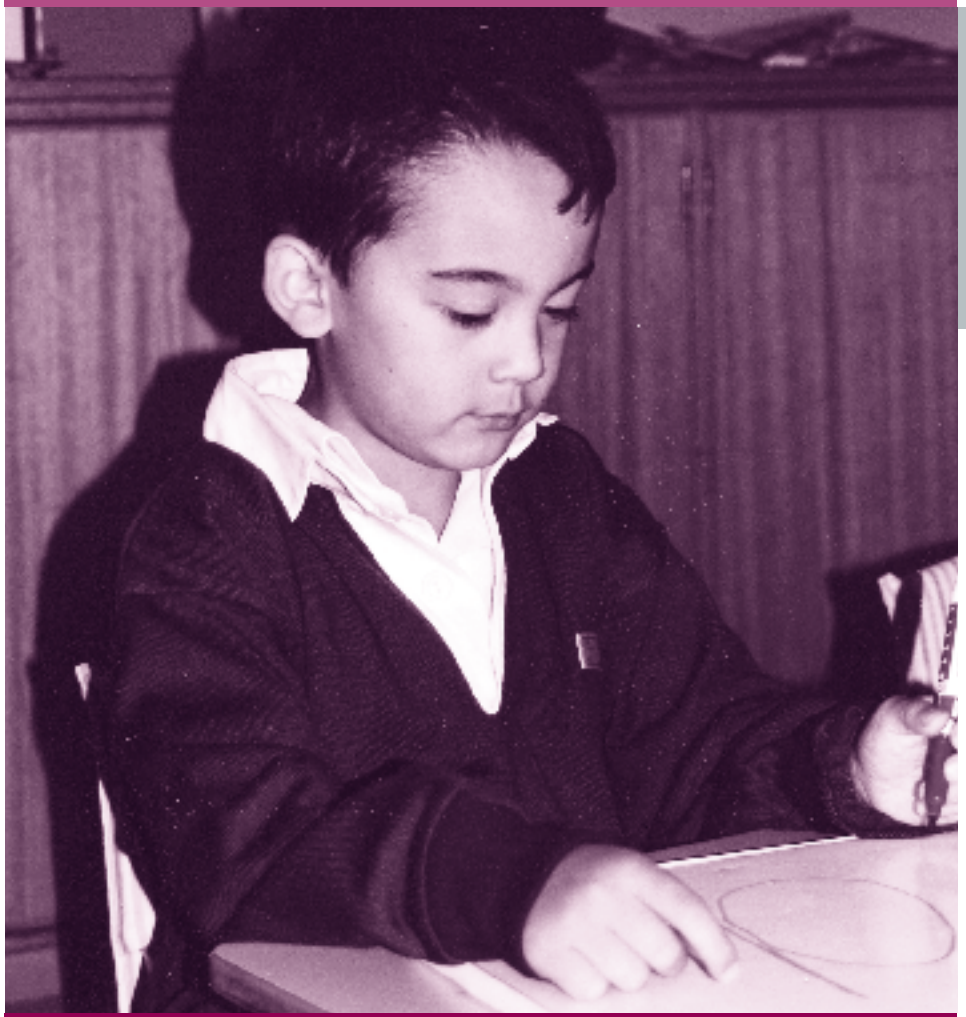
School

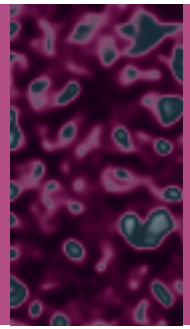
And on to school

We know from research that some children start school knowing more than 12000 words while others know fewer than 6000 words. This is the gap that starts before age two and remains. All the most important word learning happens before age three. After that, the way adults talk to them will help children find lots of new and interesting words from their everyday experiences. At school entry, we would like children to be able to:

- talk easily to familiar adults and children;
- use good manners, not just *please* and *thank you*, but knowing how to wait, say *hello* and *goodbye*, and be respectful of others;
- keep a conversation going for three or more turns;
- talk about something that has happened in the past and in another place;
- take on roles in pretend play;
- explain how something works or ought to be done;
- talk about their feelings and the feelings of others;
- listen and join in, in a small group;
- follow simple instructions;
- talk about words, sounds, letter shapes and stories; and
- say 'I don't understand,' and get an answer.

This is a 'wish list' about the skills that talk can achieve, skills that are just as important as specific 'pre-academics'.





Hearing, speaking, responding, understanding

Some children have difficulties in these areas; problems that get in the way of being able to talk, understand, and join in with others. Some are very common. When toddlers have coughs and colds, they also have blocked ears. When the cold clears up, so too does the hearing, but when colds go on and on there's a real problem. While the hearing is affected, the children can't hear what you say, can't hear soft speech sounds, and can't begin to use those sounds because they don't hear them.

An ongoing ear infection can do permanent damage to hearing, so it needs to be taken seriously. Some children suffer from episodes of middle-ear infection all through the years before school. These are the children whose speech sounds babyish, who don't listen or follow what you say, and who don't get on with other children very easily.

Jordan runs everywhere (children who can't hear well need to actively find out what's going on). He ignores any adult talk, but can be redirected when someone takes his hand. Unless watched carefully, he will blunder into other children's play and seems not to understand when the children are upset or angry over the smashed sandcastles or the tumbled blocks.

Jordan has just been fitted with tiny tubes to drain away the fluid in his ears that has prevented him hearing, but at four he has missed out on a lot about speech sounds and words and how to use them in talking to others. Without a great deal of help now, doing well in a school classroom will be difficult.

Speech sounds that are hard for Jordan can also be hard for children who can hear perfectly well but still find the sounds hard to make. Some of this is normal, because we don't expect full control of all the sounds in English until about age seven. The sounds *l, s, r, z*, and *th* are the hardest, and then all the sound combinations like *sp, thr,* and *bl*. Words like *spaghetti* and *yellow* and *breakfast* can be hard, but most children will continue to get better with the tricky sounds. As long as most of what they say can be understood, and they are happy to talk and listen, this is unlikely to be a problem.

Adam, however, had a much more serious problem. He waved a book and said, 'Dy dad di do dee dih dohs.' The title of the book was *My Cat Likes to Live in Boxes* but Adam used a 'd' for all the beginning sounds. Without the book, no-one could have understood what he was saying. Children with this problem need help fast.

Another problem that needs help is difficulty in getting words out smoothly. Stuttering or stammering makes life difficult for children who really want to talk but get stuck on a word or sound and struggle with it. They need help from a specialist, but also patience from their listeners, who help most by staying and listening. Sometimes when children are beginning to use lots of words they can get into a muddle with what they want to say. *Frank: 'But, but, but, that's my, that's my, that's my car.'* Frank isn't struggling to get the sounds out; he just wants his car. This kind of stumbling happens mostly when there's some stress, but not at other times. It is unlikely to become a serious problem.

The problems so far are about hearing and saying the speech sounds, but for another group of children the problems arise from very little talking at all. There are a number of reasons some children are slow to talk or do not talk easily or do not reply when spoken to. Children who are late talkers can give us some clues with the way they play. They don't use toys in a pretend way at the same age (about two) that other children do.

There are other children who don't need to use words because adults decide what they want and provide it. Perhaps these children need some spur to actually use words that they know! Help them with pretend play (putting teddy to bed and saying 'ni-ni'), and give choices that must be named ('Would you like apple or pear?'). Any turn-taking games, clapping games, ball games, turns at putting puzzle pieces in, and games with animal noises are fun ways of using words to play with another person.

Some children are shy in a strange place and certainly won't talk just because we prod them to say something, but will talk at home or where there is relaxed side-by-side play. Others have strict rules at home about when and with whom it is polite to talk. Children who are becoming bilingual may be silent because they have a lot of work to do, understanding and responding in one of two languages. Children who are very upset about something may not be able to talk easily because they need all their energy just to cope with their troubles.

In most of these cases where children are slow to talk or respond, it is important to be patient, but also make sure they know that a response, even a nod, is expected and valued.

There is yet another group of children for whom talking with others is a serious problem. It seems that at about age two, when using words should be taking off, something different happens.

Jade would not look at her mother, but took her hand and pulled her to the fridge. She did not respond to her mother's questions, but said, 'What a mess, what a mess.'

Her mother remembered that, the day before, some milk had spilt. Did Jade want some milk? When the spill had happened, Jade had reacted by screaming and hitting her mother. Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, like Jade, do not talk in a way that seems meaningful. Jade needs help, through early intervention, to be able to reach out to others by using words.

When to seek help

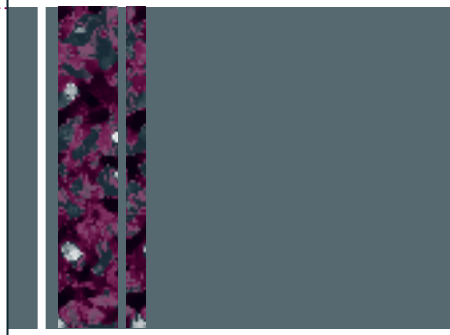
Children need help if their speech is babyish, hard to understand, seldom heard, or not making sense. An assessment by a speech pathologist can set everyone's mind at rest and/or lead to a program of early intervention so that the problems can be addressed. Since speech and hearing are so closely linked, any concerns about hearing should be followed up. You may notice that the baby does not react to doors banging, or turn to look at you when you say his name; that a two-year old makes some unusual sounds but has no words. Some states have hearing tests for babies before they leave hospital (see details in Resources). Testing at a Hearing Centre, a Federal Government program available in all states, can be through self-referral.

When children are hard to talk to, it is even more important that we try in any way we can to get a little bit of conversation going, because these are the children who need talk most of all. Children who have someone to talk to, something to talk about, and something that talk achieves, will then be able to use the language of everyday living and learning.

Resources

Hearing assessment: Hearing Centres are located in major cities in all states. Locations are listed in the telephone book or available from www.hearing.com.au

SWISH (Statewide Infant Screening for Hearing) is available in NSW for newborn babies before they leave hospital. A similar service is being set up in Victoria. South Australia has hearing tests of newborns in hospital, with other states also seeking to implement universal screening progams.



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The *Everyday learning series* has been developed to focus attention on the everyday ways in which children can be supported in their growth and development. It is for all those who are involved in children's development and learning, including early childhood professionals in all children's services, parents, grandparents and others with an ongoing responsibility for young children.

The very early years of children's lives have been shown to be crucial to their development of language and their subsequent capacity to take advantage of preschool and school programs. In *Everyday learning about talking*, experienced educator and author Julie Campbell explains the stages in language development and how the involvement of children in listening to and participating in family conversations, especially before the age of three, enhances their capacity to learn to talk. Suggestions for simple word games to use as a starting point are also included.

The progression of young children from joining in with a few simple words to actively contributing to detailed conversations is a delightful aspect of early development—this book shows parents, carers and educators what to expect along the way and how to enhance children's skills in this area.

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