

Encouraging Early Words

General strategies to support a child to use early words:



- **Comment** on what the child is doing, rather than asking questions. This will encourage the child to comment as well; don't force your child to repeat words.
- **Match your language** to the child's level, e.g. if they are using one word phrases, you use one word phrases. This helps them understand and also provides them with something achievable to copy.



- **Offer choices:** this encourages the child to use the words. To begin with, the child may do this by pointing, signing or vocalising. The adult should model the language 'apple'. As the child becomes more familiar, the adult can wait slightly longer before releasing the object, in order to encourage the child to also **label** the item they want e.g.



Child: (points at apple)
Adult: holds up two items 'Do you want apple or banana?'
Child: 'Apple' (while reaching for the apple)

- **Acknowledge any attempts** your child makes at using language. **Repeat back** to them what they have said to show you have understood them e.g.

Child: 'horse'
Adult: 'Yes, horse!'



Activity ideas to encourage early words:

'What's in the bag'/ picture lotto

Place a number of toys/items in a bag, take them out one by one and label these for the child.

'Ready Steady Go'

Play games such as bubbles or rolling a ball, say 'Ready steady...' and wait for the child to vocalise or say 'go'.

Books

Lift-the-flap books and stories with repetitive phrases - your child can be encouraged to complete the last word of the phrase after you have started it.



Nursery rhymes and action songs

Once your child is familiar with them, leave gaps at the end of a line for them to fill in.
e.g. "Old Mac Donald had a..."

Some useful early words to encourage: Mummy, daddy, go, more, finished, drink, snack, up, down, bye bye, all gone, oh no!, no, stop, favourite toy names, favourite foods.