

# Talking: on the way to school

Information about  
speech and language  
for parents of  
children entering Prep



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**When children hear high  
quality adult speech and  
when they have the fullest,  
freest opportunities to talk,  
they are being taught to  
read. (Kalmer, 2008)**



## What you can do to help your child's

# Speech Sounds

- Know your child's speech errors and what is expected for their age**

Speech sound	4 yo	5 yo	6 yo	7 yo	8+ yo
p, b, m, n, h, w, t, d, ng, y, g, k, f, v, l, s	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ch		✓	✓	✓	✓
sh, z, j			✓	✓	✓
r				✓	✓
th (as in 'think') th (as in 'this')					✓

If your child is making errors not expected for their age, it's recommended that they see a Speech-Language Pathologist.

- Provide a good model for your child**

e.g. Child – "I had tate for my birfdy and I dot wots of pwesents!"  
Adult – "You had cake for your birthday! And you got lots of presents! Lucky you!"

- Describe how to make the sound**

e.g. Child – "It's my birfdy on Thunday!"  
Adult – "On Sunday? Great! Listen, Sunday has a /s/ sound on the front – like a snake. Can you make a snake sound? ... "ssss"...that's it, try and keep your tongue behind your teeth, keep your teeth together! Good try!"

- Use visuals to help your child make the sound**

e.g. Child – "There's a pider over there!"  
Adult – "A what? Oh a spider! Have a look at me.....spider"

- Give specific praise when they try to fix their error sound**

e.g. Child – "It's a big dip... sh...ip"  
Adult – "It is a big ship! Good try! You put the /sh/ in front. You remembered to round your lips and make a long sound! Excellent!"

- Be positive.** Don't use 'good' and 'bad' sounds when talking to your child about their error. Use 'new' and 'old' sounds instead.

e.g. Child – "I'm sitting on a tair"  
Adult – "You are sitting on a chair! 'Chair' has the new sound we've been talking about at the start 'ch'. Let's practice saying our train sound 'ch', instead of the old sound 't'. Round your lips, 'ch'."

- Assume your child understands you**, even if their speech is difficult for you to understand

- Remember** – your child's speech may be more difficult to understand when your child is tired, or when they're trying to say longer/more complex words.

### Thinking about speech sounds: (a little activity for you!)

1. What are some long sounds you know? (h, f, v, s, z, sh, th)
2. What mouth part do we move to say 'k' and 'g'? (back of tongue)
3. Does air come out your nose when you say /t/ or /n/? ('n')
4. Is /s/ a noisy or quiet sound? (quiet – no voice box vibration)
5. What sounds do we make with both our lips? (p, b, m, w)

# What you can do to help your child's

## Listening skills

- Get your child's hearing checked by an audiologist.** Free hearing screenings are available in Bundaberg from the Margaret Rose Centre, IWC, and Millbank Medical Practice.
- Talk about what you/they are doing, as you/they are doing it.**

This is like being a commentator of your own or your child's actions. Talk about what you're doing and why. Be careful not to overdo it too often. Make sure your sentences and words are at a level your child understands.

*e.g. "It's bath time now. It's time to get clean. We need some water. The tap is on. The water is filling up the bath. Time to up the bubble bath in. Look at all the bubbles!"*

*e.g. "You're pushing the car. The car is big and red. You're pushing the car really fast. Oh no! The car crashed into a wall."*
- Involve your child in daily routines and give them directions.**

If they don't follow the directions correctly, repeat the direction and stress information.

*e.g. Doing laundry together. Adult: "Pass me the red socks". Child: gives black socks. Adult: "Whoops, I said pass me the **red** socks. These are the **red** socks."*

*e.g. Make sandwiches together. Adult: "Pass me four slices of bread". Child: gives two slices. Adult: "Whoops, is said **four** slices. Let's count together 1, 2, 3, **4**. I needed 2 more!"*

Make the directions more complex as they get better at following them correctly.

*e.g. "Put your socks in your room, then put the basket in the laundry"*

*e.g. "Pass me the knife, then put the butter in the fridge."*
- Sort items into groups.**

You can sort objects during daily routines, or you can complete specific sorting activities.

*e.g. Sort the clothes together when you're doing the laundry (colours, socks, shirts etc.). Sort the groceries into fridge, freezer and pantry items or fruit, veggies, meat groups.*

*e.g. In the bath sort objects into ones that will sink and ones that will float.*

*e.g. Cut out pictures of fruit, people, clothing, transport from magazines and glue them in groups in a scrapbook.*
- Talk about what things are used for, how you use them, and where you find them.**

You can do this in all the rooms of the house – bedroom, bathroom, garden, garage etc.

*e.g. Kitchen making pancakes. Adult: "We need a wooden spoon. Where is it? Good work, it lives in the second draw. We use it for stirring. Show me how you stir. Great stirring!"*
- Describe what objects look, feel, smell, sound, and taste like.**

This is a great activity to do in the kitchen, in the garden, at the shops, or at the zoo.

*e.g. Make fruit salad together and talk about the names of the fruit and how they are the same/different to other fruit in colour, size, shape, texture, smell, and taste.*

*e.g. Walk around the garden and talk about the things you see. Compare how they are the same and how they are different in colour, size, shape, weight, texture, and smell.*
- Teach your child a new word** that you've read together in a book or heard whilst out.

*e.g. In the story the bird **snapped** his beak. That means he closed his beak really quickly and it make a short sharp sound. Let's see if we can find something in the house that we can **snap**" (e.g. glasses case).*

# What you can do to help your child's Talking skills

## Follow your child's lead.

Watch what your child is doing, then get down to their level (e.g. if they're on the floor, sit on the floor with them), then talk to them about what they're doing using sentences and words they understand. Wait for them to talk before you say more.

## Show your child that you're listening to what they say.

This is one of the best ways to encourage your child's talking. Show them you're listening by nodding, smiling, asking questions, and adding comments.

## Expand what your child says to make their sentences longer and more complex.

*e.g. Child: Here's a block. Adult: It's a blue block.*  
*e.g. Child: Daddy's home. Adult: Yes, Daddy's home early.*

## Model correct sentences and words.

Stress the correct word when modelling. You can ask your child to repeat your model occasionally. Don't ask them to repeat too often.

*e.g. Child: "She dancing", Adult: "Yes, she **is** dancing"*  
*e.g. Child: "Yesterday, I runned to the shop". Adult: "You **ran** to the shop, did you?"*

## Ask open-ended questions.

These encourage your child to give you more information than yes/no questions. It also shows you're interested in what they say.

*e.g. Why is it...?, How do you...?, What is a...?, What does it look like?*

## Ask your child to tell you about daily routines.

You may need to prompt them for more information to start with. Repeat the routine back to them. Continue practicing talking about routines until your child can detail the routine well without your help.

*e.g. Adult: What do you do when you get ready for bed? Child: brush my teeth. Adult: "What else do you do?" Child: put on pyjamas. Adult: "That's right, to get ready for bed you brush your teeth and put on your pyjamas".*

## Ask your child to give you directions.

Do exactly what your child says. Example activities include making a sandwich, putting on your shoes and socks, drawing an animal etc.

*e.g. Ask your child to tell you how to make a sandwich. Child: "put the butter on the bread". Adult: puts butter container on top of the bread. Child: "Noooo! Put the butter on the bread using a knife". Adult: puts butter container on bread using a knife. etc.*

## Help your child retell a story after reading a book.

Ask your child to tell you what the book was about, and what happened. They can use the pictures in the book to help them. Prompt them for information they may have missed.

*e.g. Child: "Once there was a frog." Adult: "And what was special about the frog?" Child: "He had a big mouth and liked to eat flies". Adult: "Yes! And he had a long sticky tongue too".*

## Encourage your child to ask questions. Establish a routine at dinner time where everyone takes turns asking each other questions. Or play games like Guess Who and Celebrity Heads (use animals/objects that are familiar). Help your child think of questions if they're stuck.

# What you can do to help your child's Early Literacy Skills



- Get your child's vision checked by an optometrist**
- Play with and talk about words**
  - Establish the concept of words *e.g. "hippopotamus is a long word"*
  - Count words in books
  - Clap out words in sentences
- Teach your child to rhyme**
  - Sing and say nursery rhymes and songs and use actions *e.g. "row, row, row your boat"*
  - Listen for rhyming words. Clap when you hear one in a nursery rhyme
  - Take turns to make up rhyming words *e.g. cat... hat, mat, sat...*
  - Pause and look expectantly at your child before a rhyming word in a song. Let your child fill in the blank *e.g. Adult: "...climbed up the water spout, down came the rain and washed the spider" (pause) Child: "out!"*
  - Place two objects on a table and ask the child if they rhyme *e.g. dice and rice*
- Break up words into syllables (beats) together**
  - Clap and count the beats in a word *e.g. din-o-saur = 3*. Do this with family names *e.g. Em-il-y = 3, Jack-son = 2*
  - Decide whether words are long or short depending on the number of syllables *e.g. "which word is longer 'helicopter' or 'train'. 'train' only has one beat. 'he-li-cop-ter' is the longer word. It has 4 beats"*
  - Practice blending the syllables together *e.g. ba-by. "What word is that?"*
- Play with sounds**
  - Go on sound walks, listening to different sounds *e.g. birds, cars*
  - Talk about the first sounds in words *e.g. dog starts with a 'd' sound*
  - Look for other things around you that start with the same sound. Play "I Spy".
- Read books**
  - Choose books of interest together.
  - Read to your child every day. When you're reading the story pause to ask your child questions about the pictures, or what they think will happen next
  - Repeat favourite books - learning to anticipate what comes next is fun!
- Play with letters**
  - Have sets of magnetic letters for children to play with. Buy 2 sets and find letters that match.
  - Display the Alphabet.
  - Copy over letters in paint or felt pen.
  - Have writing tools (paint, pencils, crayons) and paper always available.
- Model reading and writing**
  - Write a shopping list together.
  - Write a letter together. You write while your child dictates.
  - Let your child see you reading books, magazines, signs, package labels etc.
  - Look up information together *e.g. TV guide, phone book, Wikipedia*

## LANGUAGE IN THE LAUNDRY

- ☉ Washing is a chore at home that we can't ignore. But with a little extra energy a daily job can become a language learning environment for your child.



### IN THE LAUNDRY TALK ABOUT...

- ☉ **SORTING:** Ask your child to help you sort the washing before you put it in the machine. *'Put all of Daddy's work clothes together'* *'Put all of the socks and underwear together'* *'Put all of the towels and sheets together'*



- ☉ **COUNTING:** Count the number of socks / shirts / towels as you hang them on the line.
- ☉ **DESCRIPTIONS:** Talk about whose clothes they are and what they look like. E.g., *'These are Daddy's long black pants'* *'This is my new red stripy dress'* *'The little blue shirts are my uniform'*
- ☉ **COMPARISONS:** Talk about how clothes are different. Compare them e.g., *'A jumper has long sleeves, a shirt has short sleeves, a singlet doesn't have any sleeves'*, *'Mummy's dresses are big and my dresses are small'*
- ☉ **MEASUREMENT:** Ask your child to help you measure the amount of washing powder you need. Discuss concepts such as 'half' 'full'. *'Today the machine has lots of things in it. We will need a full cup of detergent. Fill it all the way to the top. A full cup.'*
- ☉ **FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS:** Involve your child in hanging out the clothes. Give them directions of increasing complexity eg. *'Give mummy the socks'*, *'Pass me the red socks'*, *'Pass me the yellow towel and three pegs'*
- ☉ Encourage fine motor development by letting your child use the pegs to hang the washing out. Pinching the pegs together is good for developing finger skills.
- ☉ **DECISIONS:** talk with your child about the concepts of 'wet' and 'dry'. Let them feel the washing when it is wet as you hang it out. Explain that it is time to take it off when it feels dry. Ask your child to feel the washing and decide if it is ready to be taken off.
- ☉ **SORTING:** together sort the dry clothes into those that do and do not need ironing. Then sort the piles to be put away. *'Put all of Mummy's clothes together'*, *'Put all of Daddy's clothes in a pile beside Mummy's'*



*Remember by making these activities fun and involving your child, not only will you be teaching them but it will also give a helping hand.*

## LANGUAGE IN THE BATHROOM



- ☉ Daily activities in the bathroom are a great time to practice language activities with your child. You can use this time to teach your child words and concepts on a regular basis.

### IN THE BATHROOM, TALK ABOUT...

- ☉ **PLAY:** Allow your child time to play during bath time. Encourage them to talk during this play time and tell you what they are doing. Help your child to expand his/her language by providing good language models and extending their utterances by a word or two. "Duck swim" "Yes the duck is swimming. Duck is swimming in the bath."
- ☉ **USE:** Use household objects to play in the bath. Talk about what the object is normally used for, where the child might find it in the house, and what they can do with it in the bath. Use things such as colanders, funnels, empty margarine containers / yoghurt tubs, empty detergent bottles, sponges etc.
- ☉ **BODY PARTS:** Bath time is a great time to learn the names of our body parts. Start off with the well known parts e.g., head, face, arms, legs etc. Then label things like knees, elbows, ankles, knuckles etc. Ask your child to wash the different parts of their body and dry them when they are finished.
- ☉ **CONCEPTS:** Talk about opposite concepts that are demonstrated when we have a bath.
  - 'Dry-Wet' - talk about how before we get in the bath we are dry. Then when you get in the water you are wet. How do you feel after you use your towel?
  - 'Hot-Cold' - talk about the different taps in the bathroom. The cold tap typically has a blue dot and the hot tap has a red. Explain why you shouldn't touch the hot tap. Show the child that you have to use both hot and cold water to make the bath just right.
  - 'Float-Sink' - use household objects or toys, put them in the bath and see what they do. Talk about how heavy objects sink and light objects float.
  - Other concepts may include: 'Dirty-Clean', 'Full-Empty'



**SEQUENCING:** Talk about the steps you take in routines that occur in the bathroom e.g., brushing your teeth. See if your child can tell you what they do in each step as they do it: *'I squeeze the toothpaste onto my brush...'* Alternatively talk your child through the sequence as they complete the task.

## LANGUAGE IN THE KITCHEN



- ⊗ Food time can be fun time. So take time out to cook and have fun with your child. From an early age children can participate in and enjoy cooking activities. As your child gets older you can give him/her more responsibilities.

### IN THE KITCHEN TALK ABOUT...

- ⊗ **ACTIONS:** Get into the habit of saying out loud what you or your child are doing in the kitchen e.g., 'I'm cutting the vegetables for the soup', 'I'm grating the cheese for the pizza', 'I'm washing the dishes to make them clean' etc
- ⊗ **FUNCTIONS:** Talk about what things are used for in the kitchen e.g., knife for cutting, spoon for stirring, bowl for mixing etc



- ⊗ **DESCRIPTIONS:** Talk about things in the kitchen and what they look, smell, taste, feel and sound like. Use words like: big, little, long, round, bumpy, spiky, soft, hard, sweet, sour, hot, cold, sticky, salty, etc.

- ⊗ **WHERE:** Talk about where things are in the kitchen. Try to use some of your 'position' words; 'The cake is in the oven' 'The cup is on the table' 'The cloth is under the sink' 'The plate goes between the knife and fork' etc.

- ⊗ **SEQUENCE:** Talk about the steps you take in cooking activities. For example; when making a sandwich:

*'First we get the bread and the toppings out.*

*Then we put the butter on.*

*Next we choose what we want on the sandwich.*

*Then we spread the jam/vegemite on.*

*Then we cut the sandwich in half.*

*Then we eat it.'*



Your child can also anticipate what comes next in an activity e.g., 'what do we need to do now the ingredients are in the bowl?' 'What will I need to stir it?'