

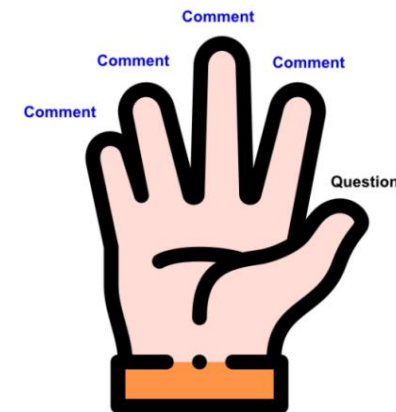
# Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

## Supporting child with speech, language and communication difficulties

Everyone in a child's life can help children to develop communication by using these strategies. They can be used in all activities including play, everyday routines and focused group times.

- **Watch, wait and Listen** – get down to the child's level so you are face to face. This allows you to connect with each other, to share the moment, watch facial expressions and help with their understanding.
- **Give extra time**- children with SLC difficulties often need longer to process and respond to language. Make sure that you are pausing and allowing some silence to give the child this extra time. Try counting to 10 in your head.
- **Mirror what the child is doing** – this encourages you to follow their lead rather than being too directive. You can join in with them by copying what they are doing.
- **Make comments instead of asking too many questions.** Children develop language by hearing words used around them. Watch what the child is interested in and comment and add language e.g. "wow that's a big dinosaur," "the car is driving so fast," "mmm, delicious cake!"
- **Questions which support language and learning...**
- **help children to anticipate** "What next?" "What if?" "What now?"
- **allow children to choose and decide** "do you want to paint or use the clay?" "What would you like to do?"
- **extend children's thinking** "I wonder..." "How does it work?"

Use the five finger rule to help you remember to comment more, question less



- **Keep your language simple and repetitive to give children lots of experience of important words and phrases.** This helps children understand new words and it also helps the child to be able to copy the language we are using. If we speak in long sentences, they are not going to be able to copy, as they won't be able to remember what we have said.
- **Expand** what a child is saying by repeating their message and adding a word. If they say 'car,' you could expand their language by saying 'blue car' or 'big car' or 'fast car.'
- **Use visual support** – use actions, gestures, facial expressions, objects, pictures and photos to support the language that you are modelling. This is especially helpful when modelling new words and vocabulary, as it helps children understand what the word means.
- **Create opportunities for the child to lead.** Some children may need YOU to change the environment in a way that makes them want or need to communicate with you. You can help them to start an interaction with you by creating opportunities for them to lead – so that they need to ask you for something (maybe with words or actions or both). These strategies are intended for children who do not initiate interaction much.
  - 1) High interest toys/objects that a child needs to operate e.g. wind-up toys, bubbles or an activity the child can't do without your help...then wait.
  - 2) Place a favourite object within the child's view but out of reach...then wait (e.g. in a closed box, in a bag with a zipper, or with a lid on tight). The child has to then ask for help to open the container.
  - 3) Offer a little bit...then wait (e.g. if a child wants juice, give just a little and then wait for them to ask for more juice.) When pushing a child on a swing, push once, let the swing stop and wait for them to ask for another push.
  - 4) Offer a choice, and then wait e.g. give choices of snack, toys, and books. Keep to a choice of 2.



**Remember that communication is more than just words. Use body language, facial expression, gestures and signs and respond when children use these.**

**Remember to make communication FUN – use singing, rhymes, stories and children's favourite activities to support and develop their skills.**

## Further Resources

Use the [All Talk Responsive Practitioner Evaluation Tool](#) to support you in reflecting on the way that you interact and engage with children in your setting. Team up with a peer, observe each other and choose a strategy you would like to try or do more of.

Have a look on our '[Supporting Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs](#)' page for more advice sheets on communication temptations, using visual supports and encouraging quiet children and more.