Siarad Gyda Fi
Talk With Me

Supporting the Development of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years

Section 3:
Guidance for 18 months – 2 years

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Supporting the Development of Speech, Language and Communication in the Early Years

Section 3: Guidance for 18 months – 2 years

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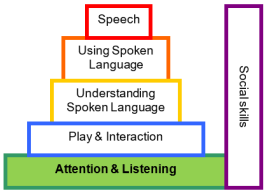
Throughout this guidance, references have been made to typical development of SLC. It is important to support the child at their *developmental stage* rather than their age.

Attention and Listening

18 months – 2 years



Attention and listening skills are the foundation of speech, language and communication. Children need to develop these essential skills to be able to understand the world around them, develop social skills, understand routines, learn new words and develop speech sounds.

It is important to make sure children are *attending* before expecting them to listen.

Between 18 months – 2 years you may notice the child…

- listens to a story with pictures
- likes to focus on an activity of their choice
- may find it difficult to be directed by an adult
- needs an adult to call their name to help them attend to what is being said
- enjoys listening to rhymes, songs and familiar stories.

Creating an enabling environment:

- ☑ Ensure there are quiet areas inside and outdoors.
- ☑ Repeat songs, rhymes and stories over and over again, using props.
- ☑ Ensure children can focus during shared activities e.g. avoid setting up snack during story time.

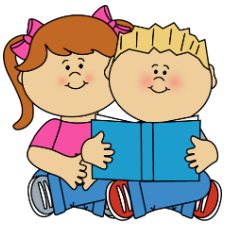
Strategies to develop attention and listening:

- Get face to face with the child.
- Follow the child's lead.
- Reduce distractions and background noise.
- Model good attention and listening.
- Praise good attention and listening behaviours.

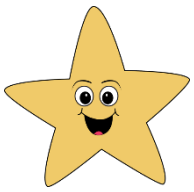
Use the child's name to gain their attention.

PLAY WITH ME… use the suggested activities on page 51

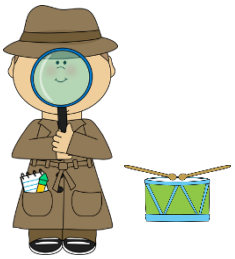
Share a story



Sing songs and rhymes

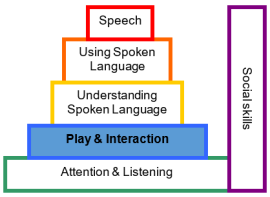


Listen for sounds



Play and Interaction

18 months – 2 years



Play is how children make sense of the world and it is crucial to support brain development in the early years. Through play, children develop and learn to use their speech, language and communication skills. Play is the essential context for learning about social skills for children under the age of five.

Interaction includes the ability to play cooperatively with peers and take turns. Through play and interaction, children learn to understand and regulate their emotions and develop their social skills.

Between 18 months and 2 years you may notice the child…

- takes turns in simple games e.g. rolling a ball
- is developing their pretend play with toys e.g. feeding dolly, driving a car
- follows an adult's body language e.g. pointing, gestures and facial expressions
- uses eye contact to start off interactions
- begins to play with miniature toys
- begins to sort and group objects e.g. puts all the cars or animals together
- can complete a simple shape sorter.

Creating an enabling environment:

- ☑ Ensure children can choose freely from a suitable range of books, toys and resources.
- ☑ Encourage children to help tidy up and sort things into boxes and baskets.
- ☑ Support miniature play with small world objects and toys.

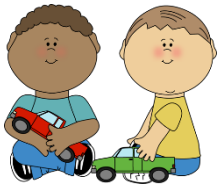
STRATEGIES to develop play and interaction:

- Model the 'play' opportunities and encourage interaction.
- Talk about what the child is doing by commenting on their play.
- Model and play pretend games with the child.
- Follow the child's lead and join in with their play.
- Encourage the child to take turns.
- Create opportunities for the child to communicate e.g. give the child a little bit of milk so they can communicate that they want more.

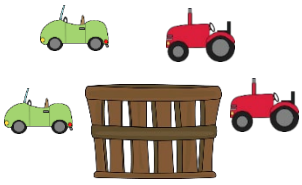
Get face to face with the child.

PLAY WITH ME…have a look at some suggested activities on page 54

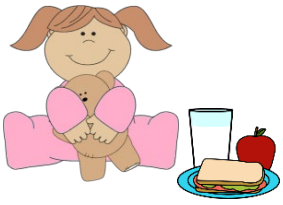
My turn, your turn



Tidy up together

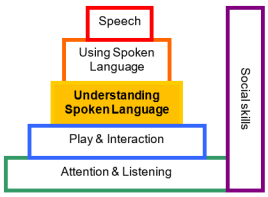


Let's go on a picnic



Understanding Spoken Language

18 months – 2 years



Understanding spoken language (receptive language) is essential for children to make sense of the world around them. It includes the ability to understand the words, sentences and the non-verbal communication of others. Children learn to develop an understanding of words and sentences in stages, first one word, then a number of individual words, then short sentences and longer more complex sentences.

Between 18 months – 2 years you may notice the child…

- is rapidly developing their single word understanding – understands 200-500 words
- follows simple questions and instructions e.g. 'get mummy's shoes', 'where's teddy?'
- understands simple action words e.g. drink, sleep
- can find a familiar, named object when given a choice.

Creating an enabling environment:

- ☑ Make sure children can find resources they want e.g. place resources at eye level.
- ☑ Use photos, pictures and words to label boxes and baskets.
- ☑ Support the understanding of stories with puppets and props.
- ☑ Support the understanding of daily routines with visuals e.g. 'now and next' pictures.

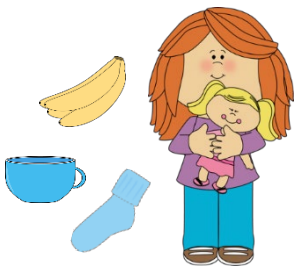
STRATEGIES to develop understanding of spoken language:

- Get the child's attention before talking with them.
- Follow the child's lead and talk about what they are doing.
- Give the child plenty of time to respond.
- Use your voice, gestures or a sign to emphasize key words.

Use short, simple sentences.

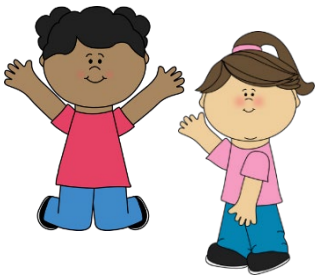
PLAY WITH ME…have a look at some suggested activities on page 57

Listen and do



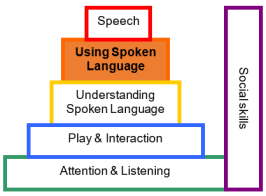
Let's go shopping

Join in with action songs



Using Spoken Language

18 months – 2 years



Using spoken language (expressive language) is the ability to recall words and information and use language, body language and gestures appropriately in given situations e.g. to label/name objects, describe actions and events, ask and answer questions and retell a story.

A good vocabulary is essential for children so that they can make the best of learning opportunities and express their thoughts, needs and wants.

Between 18 months – 2 years you may notice the child…

- still understands a lot more words than they use
- learns and uses new words rapidly – around 50 words
- starts to put 2-3 words together e.g. 'more milk'
- frequently asks questions e.g. 'who's that'?'
- Sounds like they are talking in sentences by using babble in between real words.

Creating an enabling environment:

- ☑ Notice the child's interests.
- ☑ Add new resources to encourage learning new vocabulary.

STRATEGIES to develop using spoken language:

- Follow the child's lead and talk about what they are doing.
- Give choices e.g. do you want milk or water? (when showing the child these).
- Use the names of objects rather than asking 'what is this?'
- Add an extra word to what the child says e.g. child: 'car' adult: 'daddy's car'.

Give the child time to respond.

PLAY WITH ME… have a look at some suggested activities on page 60

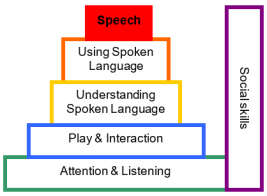
Puppet play

What's in the bag?

Play with cars

Speech

18 months – 2 years



Speech (phonology) refers to being able to say speech sounds to make yourself understood. When we are listening to a child talk, we can think about how clear their words are. *Speech* is not the same as *talking*.

Use the **English Speech Sound Development Poster** on page 62 and Speech acquisition - Multilingual Children's Speech (csu.edu.au) to support your observations.

Between 18 months – 2 years you may notice the child…

- uses speech sounds p, b, m, w, t, d, n
- sounds like they are talking in sentences by using babble in between real words.

Creating an enabling environment:

- ☑ Reduce distractions and background noise.
- ☑ Sing lots of rhymes.

STRATEGIES to use to develop clear speech:

- Get face to face with the child.
- Respond to the word the child says, not how clear they are.
- Try not to tell the child that they said something wrong.
- Try not to ask the child to repeat unclear words.
- Don't pretend to understand – encourage the child to use actions to show you what they mean.

Repeat back any words the child says, using the correct sounds.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES to support the development of speech:

Say and sing songs and rhymes every day!

Heads, shoulders, knees & toes…

Incy, wincy spider…

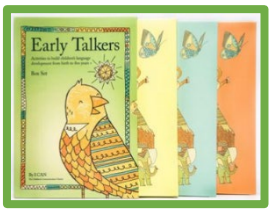
Old MacDonald had a farm…

Activities in all other areas of communication will support the development of speech at this age.

Strategy Posters and Suggested Activities: 18 months – 2 years

In this section, you will find some strategy posters and suggested activities to guide you when planning to develop the child's speech, language and communication, having used the information on the overview pages.

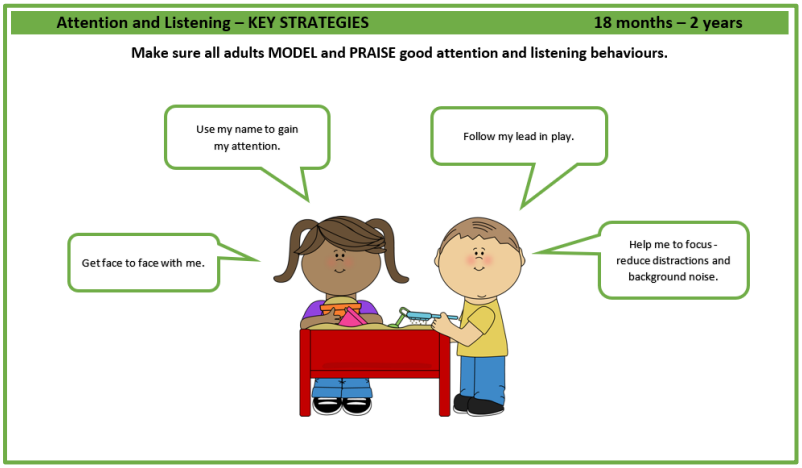
The suggested activities are given as examples; please use your own experiences and ideas to enhance them. The grids are *not* intended to be a prescriptive programme; however, the ideas can be used to support personalised targets, as appropriate. You can also use the '*Early Talkers*' boxset for more ideas (available from **speechandlanguage.org.uk.**)



Strategies to develop attention and listening:

- Get face to face with the child.
- Follow the child's lead.
- Reduce distractions and background noise.
- Model good attention and listening.
- Praise good attention and listening behaviours.

Use the child's name to gain their attention.



Each strategy is shown on a poster.

You may want to share these posters with parents.

IMPORTANT:
Use the suggested strategies with the activities, and in your interactions throughout the day.

You may want to use the suggested activities to support skills in this area.

Activity	Attention and Listening - Suggested Activities (18 months – 2 years)	Too difficult?	Too easy?
Sharing books	**Developing attention through sharing books.** **What to do:** Choose a picture book or lift-the-flap book that the child likes e.g. Where's Spot?, Dear Zoo, Where's Peppa? Share the book and as you turn the pages talk about what you can see, e.g. I can see Spot playing with his ball etc. Use facial expressions and make your voice sound interesting to engage the child in the story. Place the book within the child's reach so that they can enjoy it over and over again.	Make sure you find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus.	Introduce some new books for the child to explore with you.
Songs and Rhymes	**Joining in with action songs and rhymes** **What to do:** Sing familiar action songs and rhymes throughout the day. Encourage the child to join in with actions and/or words. Try pausing at the end of a line to see if the child joins in with the action and/or the word e.g. *'Twinkle, twinkle little ____'.* Use props to support the song or rhyme - add these to a basket or box so the child can see them and choose a favourite rhyme to sing again.	Make sure you find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus. Reduce the choice of props available.	Develop the variety of rhymes and songs you use.
Hide and seek a sound	**Listening for a sound** **What to do:** Show the child a selection of noisy toys or sound-makers. Choose one with the child and listen to the sound it makes. Hide it in an obvious place in the room or outdoors and encourage the child to find the toy by listening to its noise. Say things like 'Listen…. can you hear the noise? Where is it?'	Make sure you find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus. Reduce the selection of toys or objects.	Introduce quieter sounds.

Attention follows a developmental sequence:

0 – 11 months	8 – 20 months	22 – 36 months
Fleeting Attention Easily distracted and attention flits from one thing to another.	**Rigid Attention** Can concentrate on one task of own choice, cannot tolerate interruption from an adult.	**Single channelled attention** Will attend to an adult direction. Cannot cope doing one thing and listening to an instruction about something else.
30 – 50 months	**40 – 60 months**	**60+ months**
Focusing attention Beginning to control own focus. Can only concentrate on one thing at a time (the task or the unrelated instruction). Can shift focus of attention independently.	**Two channelled attention** Can do a task and understand an instruction at the same time. Concentration span may be short but can now be taught in a group.	**Integrated attention** Attention is controlled, sustained and well established across different situations, with different people.

- **Some children may be functioning at a level below their chronological age**
- **Children cannot develop their speech, language and communication skills if they are unable to attend or listen**

Attention and Listening – KEY STRATEGIES 18 months – 2 years

Make sure all adults MODEL and PRAISE good attention and listening behaviours.

Activity	Attention and Listening - Suggested Activities	Too difficult?	Too easy?

	(18 months – 2 years)		
Sharing books	***Developing attention through sharing books.*** **What to do:** Choose a lift-the-flap or picture book that the child likes e.g. Where's Spot?, Dear Zoo, Where's Peppa? Share the book and as you turn the pages talk about what you can see, e.g. '*I can see Spot playing with his ball.'* Use facial expressions and make your voice sound interesting to engage the child in the story. Place the book within the child's reach so that they can enjoy it over and over again.	Find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus.	Introduce some new books for the child to explore with you.
Songs and Rhymes	***Joining in with action songs and rhymes.*** **What to do:** Sing familiar action songs and rhymes throughout the day. Encourage the child to join in with actions and/or words. Try pausing at the end of a line to see if the child joins in e.g. *'Twinkle, twinkle little ____.'* Use props to support the song or rhyme - add these to a basket or box so the child can see them and choose a favourite rhyme to sing again.	Find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus. Reduce the choice of props available.	Develop the variety of rhymes and songs you use.
Hide and seek a sound	***Listening for a sound.*** **What to do:** Show the child a selection of noisy toys or sound-makers. Encourage the child to choose one and listen to the sound it makes. Hide it in an obvious place and encourage the child to find the toy by listening to its noise. Say things like 'Listen…. can you hear the noise? Where is it?'	Find a quiet time and reduce distractions to help the child to focus. Reduce the selection of toys or objects.	Introduce quieter sounds.

Play skills follow a developmental sequence:

Exploratory play (birth to around 5 months): Shakes, mouths, bangs and turns over toys and other objects to try to work out what they are. At around 9 months will look for an object that has been hidden away (understands object permanence).

Recognising objects (around 12 months): Shows an understanding of the appropriate use of an object without pretending e.g. uses a brush on their hair.

Object play (between 8-20 months): Pretends to use an object on themselves e.g. using a toy cup to pretend to drink.

Character play (between 16-26 months): Involves character toys in their play e.g. gives toy dinosaur a drink.

Acts out routines (around 22 - 36 months): Acts out simple routines through play e.g. baths and dresses dolly ready for bed. Small world play becomes more complex as the child acts out scenarios and stories. Uses objects imaginatively e.g. a box could be a car or a bed.

Role-play (around 3 to 4 years): Simple dressing up to begin with, gradually taking on more imaginative role of the whole character.

Complex and co-operative imaginative play (4 years+): Acts out sequences observed in their environment, books and TV e.g. household routines.

Interaction skills build from play and include the ability to play cooperatively with peers and take turns:

0 – 9 months	9 – 18 months	18 months – 3 years
Interactions begin and end with baby's eye contact, e.g. games such as peekaboo.	Interactions initiated by child both verbally and non-verbally e.g. pointing, giving and showing. Interaction may end by child moving away. Interactions limited to 1 or 2 turns per partner.	Interactions may be initiated using a name e.g. *'Mummy'*. Child begins to respond to questions verbally. Repeats or changes their utterance if not understood. Interaction may be restricted to comfortable, familiar situations.
3 – 4 years	**4 – 7 years**	**7 years+**
Has a variety of strategies to initiate conversation e.g. *'Guess what?'* Number of turns in conversation increases. More able to communicate with strangers. Can participate in pretend conversations. Uses language for a wide variety of functions e.g. asking questions, making suggestions, directing others.	More able to initiate and end conversations and take turns. Learns to choose most appropriate timing to join in other people's conversation. Child still assumes the listener shares his/her background knowledge. Learns to adapt styles of conversation for a variety of listeners e.g. family, friends, and teachers.	Becomes more aware of the listener and his/her background knowledge. Conveys subtleties with intonation and stress. Uses language to persuade, convey disapproval and for politeness. Develops social appropriateness.

Play and Interaction – KEY STRATEGIES 18 months – 2 years

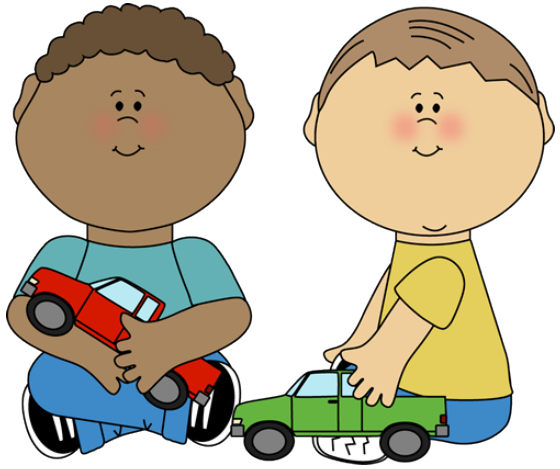
Adults may need to model the 'play' opportunities and encourage interaction.

Model and play pretend games with me.

Follow my lead and join in with my play.

Talk about what I am doing – comment on my play.

Help me to take turns.



Get face to face with me.

Create opportunities for me to communicate e.g. try giving me a little bit of milk and encourage me to ask for more.

Activity	Play and Interaction - Suggested Activities (18 months – 2 years)	Too difficult?	Too easy?
Turn taking games	***Taking turns in simple games e.g. rolling a ball.*** Developing the skills needed for later turn taking in conversation. **How to play:** Take turns to roll objects such as a ball or a car along the floor to each other. Comment on what you are doing e.g. *'I am rolling the ball to Daniel.' 'Your turn.' 'My turn.'*	Take one turn each and build up slowly.	Bring another child into the game.
Teddy Bear's Picnic	***Modelling pretend play with the child.*** **How to play:** Set up a picnic with the children's favourite teddies and/or dolls. Model feeding and giving teddy/dolly a drink and talk about what you are doing e.g. *'Teddy is eating.' 'Mmmmm, tasty!' 'Hot tea.'* Encourage the child to also feed teddy and dolly.	Model feeding teddy or dolly in context e.g. bring teddy to the snack-time table and pretend to feed him as the child is eating.	Model the next sequence of pretend play e.g. after the child has fed teddy, model wiping teddy's face or giving him a drink.
Tidy up together	***Encouraging the child to help tidy up and sort things into boxes and baskets.*** **What to do:** Set up baskets and boxes for toys and resources and label them clearly with photos of the objects to go inside. These can be used every day to encourage children to collect up and sort toys and objects to put them in the right box or basket.	Start with two widely different categories e.g. food and animals. Show how to sort one type of toy at a time. Talk about what you are doing e.g. *'All the animals go in this box.'*	Have three different types of toys for children to sort e.g. animals. food and transport.

Understanding Spoken Language (receptive language) follows a recognised progression:

Birth	6 months	12 months
Responds to sound (spoken or non-spoken). Responds to intonation and emotion in voices.	Understands whole phrases when used in familiar routines.	Understands key words in familiar situations (often called situational understanding).
18 months	**2 years**	**2 ½ years**
Understands names of absent objects whenever used in familiar sentences at any time.	Can relate two named objects. Can identify objects from a description of their use.	Understands simple actions and properties not related to themselves. Understands simple prepositions, e.g. *in, on, under* and basic size concepts, e.g. *big, little*, when used in simple sentences. Begins to understand 'time' as a reference to the immediate past and future.
3 years	**4 years**	**5 years +**
Relates up to three key words in a sentence when there are no other clues to help. Begins to understand tense, e.g. *We <u>went</u> to the shop; We <u>will go</u> to the shop*. Understands simple concepts of shape and colour when used in simple sentences.	Follows a simple story sequence. Understands most straightforward sentences. Continues to benefit from situational clues.	Gradually understands more complex sentences out of context. Receptive vocabulary continues to develop.

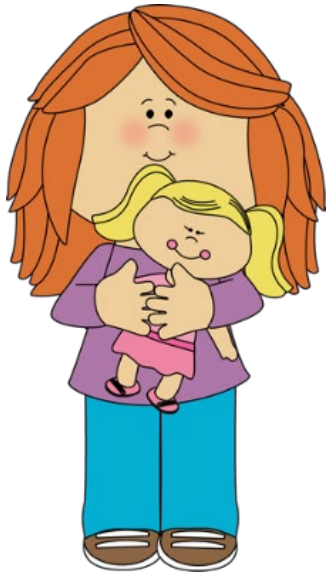
Understanding Spoken Language – KEY STRATEGIES 18 months – 2 years

Use your voice, gestures or a sign to emphasize key words.

Talk about what I am doing.

Follow my lead and talk about what I am doing.

Use short, simple sentences.



Get my attention before you talk with me.

Give me plenty of time to respond.

Activity	Understanding Spoken Language - Suggested Activities (18 months – 2 years)	Too difficult?	Too easy?
Listen and do	***Following simple questions and instructions.*** **What to do:** Play alongside the child and encourage them to follow simple instructions e.g. *'Give me the cup.' 'Show me dolly.'* There will be many opportunities throughout the day to use simple questions and instructions and you can develop this idea into simple games e.g. fishing games, posting games…	Show and demonstrate once you have given an instruction. Reduce the number of objects/toys.	Bring in the use of simple verbs e.g. 'Make teddy sleep'; and concepts 'Give me the big plate.'
Action songs	***Understanding simple action words (verbs).*** **What to do:** Play a game with a simple action song e.g. *Here we go 'round the mulberry bush.* Encourage the children to join in with the actions e.g. *'This is the way we… clap our hands etc.'* You can also use this in everyday routines e.g. '*This is the way we wash our hands/brush our teeth.'*	Show the children the actions in the song using teddy or dolly.	Vary the words of the song to add more actions.
Let's go shopping	***Finding a familiar, named object when given a choice.*** **What to do:** Set up a simple shop on the table or on the floor. Show the children the objects and name them as you set them out. Ask the child to get certain items to put in a shopping bag or basket e.g. *'Find the apple.'* Praise the child when they find the correct object.	Start by asking for one item. Limit the amount of choice available.	Increase the number of items you ask for.

Using Spoken Language (expressive language) follows a recognised progression:

9 months	18 months	2 years
Babble, early attempts at words e.g. '*Dada*'.	Uses approximately 50 - 100 words with more recognisable words. Sometimes uses 2-word learnt phrases e.g. '*all gone*'	Uses approx. 200 – 300 words. Puts 2 and 3 words together in short sentences e.g. '*Me go home*'.
2 ½ years	**3 years**	**3 ½ years**
Puts 3- and 4-word sentences together using different sorts of words. Starts to use 'question words' e.g. '*Me go there*?'	Links more than 4 words together. Starts to use *'and'* to link ideas. Starts to use pronouns *'I', 'he', 'she'* and plurals e.g. '*I want juice and sweets*.'	Links ideas together using *'cos'* (because) e.g. '*I put wellies on 'cos it's raining*.' Asks more complicated questions using *'why'* and *'how'*.
4 years		**4 ½ years**
Uses language for a variety of reasons e.g. to retell favourite stories, play make-believe games and retell events. Uses talk to problem-solve and form friendships. Asks many questions to find out information.		Children have a vocabulary of about 5000+ words.

Using Spoken Language – KEY STRATEGIES 18 months – 2 years

Follow the child's lead and talk about what they are doing.

Give me time to respond.

Add an extra word to what I say e.g. I say '*car*', you say '*Daddy's car*'.

Give me a choice e.g. do you want *milk* or *water*?

Follow my lead.

Use the names of objects rather than asking me '*What is this*?'

Activity	Using Spoken Language Suggested Activities (18 months – 2 years)	Too difficult?	Too easy?
What's in the bag?	***Increasing vocabulary by naming items.*** **What to do:** Place a collection of familiar objects in a bag. Take turns to pull out an object and encourage the child to name it e.g. *'What's in the bag? It's a __.'* Repeat the word back e.g. *'Yes, it's a banana.'* If the child does not name the object, name it for them and use a sign/gesture.	Use very familiar items and name them for the child.	Add more items.
Puppet play	***Joining words together.*** **What to do:** Have a selection of food to feed a puppet. Introduce the puppet and say *'Hello (puppet's name).'* Ask the child what the puppet would like to eat and then demonstrate feeding the puppet using short phrases e.g. *'More banana.' 'Puppet eating cake.' 'Milk gone.'*	Model feeding the puppet in snack time - pretend to feed him as the child is eating.	Encourage the child to use two-word and three-word phrases when telling you what to give the puppet to eat.
Playing with cars	***Increasing vocabulary, including action words (verbs) by naming them.*** **What to do:** Use a car mat (you could create your own). Drive the cars along the road and talk about what you are doing e.g. *'You're driving the car.' 'We're going to the garage.' 'The car is stopping.' 'Stop.'* Encourage the child to tell you what they are doing.	Comment on what is happening without asking the child to tell you.	Introduce different places on the car mat and talk about where you are going. Introduce describing words e.g. *big, little* and prepositions *under, in.*

Typical Development of Speech

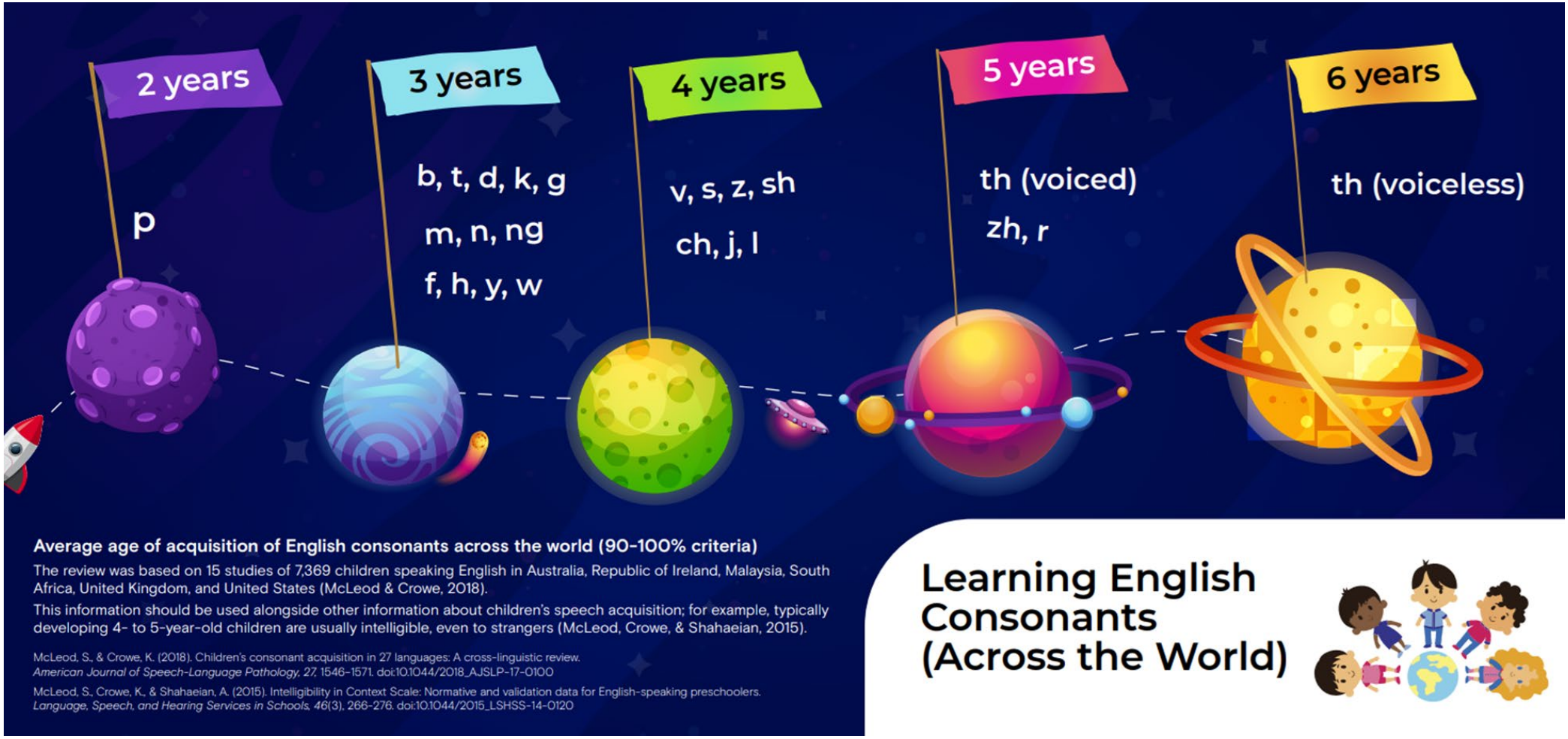
2 years 10 months – 3 years 10 months	3 years 10 months – 5 years 1 month	5 years 2 months – 7 years 3 months
50% of a child's speech is understood by unfamiliar adults	75% of a child's speech is understood by unfamiliar adults	90% of a child's speech is understood by unfamiliar adults

Hustad, Mahr, Natke and Rathouz (2021)

- **Speech sounds follow a developmental progression**
- **Speech sounds vary across languages.**
- **Children learning more than one language may develop speech sounds in a different order.**
- **For further information, please refer to** Speech acquisition - Multilingual Children's Speech (csu.edu.au)

English Speech Sound Development

(There is no information on the norms for speech sound development in Welsh)



Speech - KEY STRATEGIES 18 months – 2 years

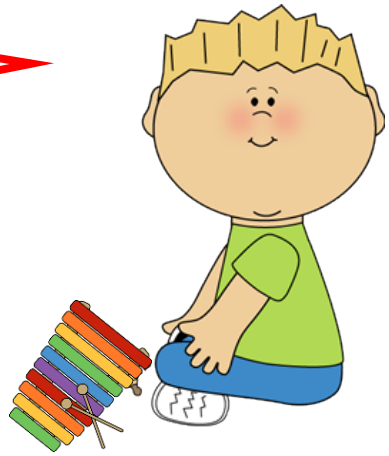
Try not to tell me that I said something wrong.

Repeat my word back to me (with the correct sounds) if you know what I've said.

Respond to the words I am saying, not how clear I am.

Try not to ask me to repeat unclear words.

Get face to face with me so I can see how you make sounds. Don't expect me to copy you.



Don't pretend to understand – ask me to use actions to show you what I mean.