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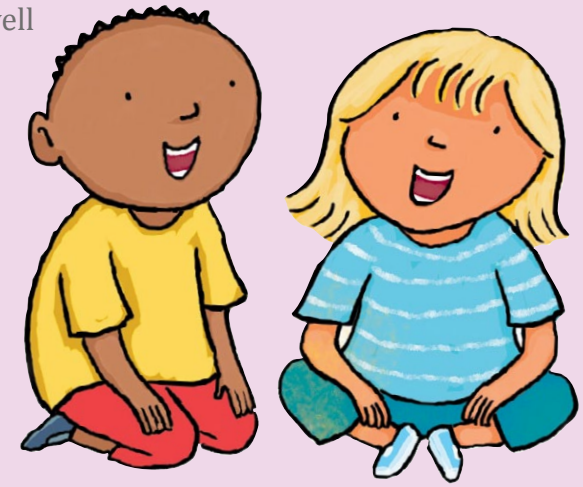
#READYFORSCHOOL

HAPPY TALK

Good communication is essential for learning. As well as being the foundation for reading and writing, it's also vital for children's social and emotional development. Most early years teachers agree that, for a child starting school, being able to talk about what they think and explain how they feel are more important than any academic skills.

Good communication has a positive impact on behaviour too. Children who can't communicate their wishes, feelings and concerns are more likely to become disruptive or withdrawn in the classroom.



GET STARTED

MAKING DECISIONS

Give your child lots of opportunities to make decisions, give opinions and discuss their feelings. Would they prefer cereal or toast for breakfast? Which toy would be the best present for their friend? What are they most looking forward to about starting school?

READING TOGETHER

Research shows that children who are read to daily do better in all areas of learning. Don't limit reading to bedtime stories – magazines, websites, catalogues, signs and recipes all provide opportunities for reading and discussion all day long.

ROLE-PLAY

Encourage role-play. Whether it's fantasy dressing up, acting out real-life roles such as doctor or teacher, or small-world play with little figures, role-play helps children develop their language and social skills, empathy and cultural awareness.

PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

Playing with other children is also important, especially as they get closer to school age. Spending time with their peers teaches children about cooperation, collaboration and negotiation – all vital skills if they are to become good communicators.

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GET TALKING

FAMILY PHOTOS

Looking at photos together is a great way to get conversation flowing. Your child will be fascinated by pictures of themselves when they were little and old family albums from before they were born.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Encourage your child to talk to 'safe' adults when you're out and about, for example greeting friends' parents, paying for something in a shop, or asking for something at the supermarket.

PLAY BACK

Use a phone, tablet or dictaphone to enable your child to record and listen to their voice.

DISCUSSIONS

When you read a story or watch a TV programme, ask them how the characters are feeling, and why.

PUPPET PLAY

Try some puppet play. Speaking to or through a handpuppet can encourage children (especially those who are shy or troubled) to voice ideas and feelings they might otherwise find it hard to express.

PICTURE BOOKS

Picture books that are particularly good for promoting discussion include You Choose by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt and Would You Rather? by John Burningham.

TALKING TOGETHER

At the end of the day, encourage your child to talk about what they've done and perhaps to recount it back to someone – Mum or Dad coming in from work or Grandma on the phone, for instance.

COPING WITH "WHY?"

If your preschooler's favourite word is "why", turn it back at them with: "Well, why do you think?"

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PACEY IS THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDCARE AND EARLY YEARS

We promote best practice and support childcare professionals to deliver high standards of care and learning.
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Every day they demonstrate their commitment to the highest standards of care and help children get the best start in life.

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