



## Tips and activities for you and your child

Our Children's Service team is looking forward to working with you and your child! We have created this handout to help you get started before your first appointment. If you have any questions, please phone us on 1800 242 696.

In this handout, you will find information about children's development and some activities to try. This information is grouped into language, speech, gross motor, fine motor and play skills.

We have also included some activities you can try at home with your child to support their development in these areas. Depending on the age of your child, some activities and information will be more relevant than others.

We hope this document gives you some ideas of what you can try now and into the future.

### Language

Children learn language by listening to what people are saying to them and saying around them. When children are learning to talk, they will make many mistakes. Children may have trouble putting words in the right order in a sentence. For example, they might say "me can do it" instead of "I can do it". They may also struggle to use location words, like "in" or "on", and say "the cup is up the table" instead of "the cup is on the table".

You can help your child use words the right way by:

**Modelling:** Show your child what we want them to say. If your child makes a mistake in their sentence, say it back to them in a natural way, with a little emphasis on the mistake.

**Child:** "Him is playing."

**Parent:** "Yes, he is playing. It looks like fun."

**Repeating:** Children are more likely to say words they have heard many times before. Repeating the same words over - by reading the same story for a few nights or choosing some key words to say in an activity - helps your child focus on the word and learn its meaning.

**Waiting:** Give your child time to talk. Listening and waiting will encourage your child to talk more, and boost their confidence.

**Holding back:** Instead of anticipating your child's needs, wait for them to indicate they want something. When they want something, hold the item to the side of your mouth and model what you would like them to say. Try three times with a slight pause between. If they don't say the words after three attempts, give them the object.

**Expanding:** Expanding on what your child has said shows them you have understood and are interested, and teaches them new words.

**Child:** "More."

**Parent:** "More milk."

**Talk to yourself:** When you are doing everyday tasks, use simple language to talk about what you are doing and thinking.

**Parent:** "Pack up the toys. Ball goes in. Car goes in. Book goes in. Shut the lid. All finished."



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## Speech

*\*Relates to children three years and older*

Teaching your child how to say sounds correctly is very important. It ensures your child can communicate and be understood by others. It also helps if your child can say sounds the right way when they are learning to read and write.

Here are some things you can do to help your child make a speech sound:

- Practise every day. You will achieve more by doing a little every day instead of one long speech practice session.
- Use fun games and lots of encouragement to engage your child in practice.
- Explain how the sound is made by telling your child what they need to do with their lips, teeth and tongue. Encourage them to look at your mouth or a mirror and listen.
- Praise your child immediately after every good attempt of a sound. For example:
  - "You're trying so hard."
  - "Good, you remembered to put your teeth together for 's'."
  - "Great /k/ sound."
- Correct mistakes in a positive way – praise your child for their effort and show them how they can get it right next time.

Try not to:

- Persist until they get it right – this can be frustrating and demotivating for your child (and you).
- Tell your child they are being lazy or stubborn. As soon as you start to feel frustrated, praise them for having a go and move on.
- Focus on more than one sound at a time, this will confuse most children.
- Expect too much too soon. Learning new sounds takes time.

## Gross motor skills

Gross motor skills help us move our whole body and use our large muscles. These skills help us develop core strength and perform everyday tasks like walking, running, jumping, and sitting at the table.

These are some activities you can try at home (depending on the age and ability of your child):

**Floor games:** Play games, read books or complete puzzles while asking your child to lie on their tummy on the floor. This helps improve core strength and posture.

**Ball games:** Kicking, throwing, bouncing, and catching a ball are great for developing coordination skills.

**Balance games:** Practise walking on uneven surfaces or along a line on the ground. You can do this with tape on the floor or a crack in the footpath.

**Jumping games:** These help build leg strength. Try hopscotch, skipping or 'follow the leader' with jumping and hopping.

**Running:** Practise running and chasing things, and encourage dodging and change of direction movements to improve agility. Most kids love a game of chasey!

**Riding a bike/tri-cycle:** This supports your child's coordination, balance and leg strength.

**Swim:** Swimming isn't just a lifesaving skill; it's great for muscle memory and coordination.

**Go to the park:** There are many opportunities to work on motor skills at your local park. Climbing, jumping, pulling, pushing or crawling are all beneficial skills that can be performed when playing on playgrounds.



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## Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills are the movements and use of the small muscles in our hands.

Having good finger, wrist and hand strength, along with coordination, helps with eating, dressing and writing.

Here are some activities you can try at home:

**Play with playdough:** Squeezing, rolling and poking playdough is a great activity for finger movement and hand strength. Get your child to practise with both hands.

**Snappy fingers:** Supervise your child depending on their age, and get them to pick up and play with small items like buttons, beads, or even peas or corn at dinner, using their snappy fingers (thumb and pointer finger).

**Pegs:** Squeeze clothes pegs open and shut using 'snappy fingers' (thumb and pointer finger). Play games by attaching pegs onto string or cardboard, or even the washing basket.

**Blocks or magnetic tiles:** Let your children get creative with building using blocks or magnetic tiles.

**Drawing and colouring in:** Draw and colour in using pencils, textas, paint or a paint brush and water.

**Cutting with scissors:** Using scissors can be hard work for little hands. Start with small snips on thick paper and work your way to cutting out shapes using thin paper.

**Arm and wrist strengthening:** Try crawling, carrying, pushing, and climbing on the playground to increase arm and wrist strength.

**Change positions:** Instead of always sitting at the table to draw, stick some paper on a window and draw on that. Changing positions when doing different tasks helps our muscles to get stronger.

## Play

Play helps children learn. When they explore their world, children learn they can cause things to happen or change. Play is fun and important for your child's development.

Through play, children can learn:

- Different words
- Shapes, sizes and counting
- How to concentrate
- How to listen to others
- How to follow rules in a game
- Different ways to move
- About their feelings and the feelings of others
- About their senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, sound, body awareness, balance).

### We recommend:

**Sensory play** (touch, taste, smell, sight, sound and movement play): Feel different textures like toys, materials and playdough. Shake and bang bells, rattles and blocks.

**Exploratory play:** Collect objects from around the house and put them in a bag or box. Take them out one at a time to look at them and talk about them. Play games where you match objects, words, symbols, colours, shapes or ideas.

**Physical play:** Throw, catch and roll balls. Collect boxes for your child to climb in and out of. Boxes can become houses, cars, boats, rockets or anything your child wants them to be.

**Symbolic / pretend play:** Pretend to feed, wash and dress dolls and soft toys. Learn animal sounds and pretend to be animals. Play dress ups and explore characters.



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