



**Extra Support**  
**Use with any book**



# EXTRA SUPPORT – for children who are finding language learning difficult

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All children develop language at slightly different rates. It's important to adapt tasks so they are at a suitable level to allow your child to have lots of success, but also have a chance to extend their skills.

Here are our top tips for supporting children who might need some extra help.

## **REDUCE WHAT YOU ARE ASKING**

Try to ask less questions, and instead, focus on demonstrating the language. Try saying things like *"I can see a monkey"*, or *"oh dear, he feels sad"*.

Replace questions with unfinished sentences e.g. *"the monkey is..."*

Continue to give your child a chance to answer, by pausing expectantly, looking at them and waiting. Don't be put off if they don't answer, and don't force them. Demonstrate the words for them and move on.

If there are lots of choices in an activity, or you think your child doesn't know the words, try to give them maximum three options to choose from.

## **TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF WORDS**

Is there a way your child can tell you without using words? Could they point to an object or show you the action? Congratulate them for telling you a different way, and demonstrate the words for them. *"Yes, you're right! Monkey is jumping. You showed me jumping, well done"*.

You could replace the talking activities with actions ones, e.g. when retelling the story, act it out, or use teddies.

Use props to help your child understand the story, such as animal toys, lego, duplo or playmobil scenes.

Use your hands, body movements and facial expressions to give clues e.g. *"ooooooooohhhh nooooo!!!"*, *"I think it's over.... here somewhere... (point to the area)"*.

If you do ask questions, try to make these ones where your child can point or show you the answer e.g. *"Show me Monkey"* *"Oh yes he's there, thank you for pointing him out. He's high in the tree!"*.

## **DON'T BE PUT OFF**

Don't worry if your child doesn't respond how you expect them to. Keep demonstrating the language for them, and giving them a chance to join in, even if it doesn't change anything the first few times you try.

## **REPEAT BACK THE CORRECT LANGUAGE OR SOUNDS**

If your child says something incorrectly, don't point it out, just repeat back to them with the correct way of saying it. You could put a little extra 'push' on the bit they found hard e.g. "*the monkey is jumping*" or "*SSSSSSnake is SSSSliding*".

Try not to repeat back their errors (even if they sound cute!) as this will reinforce them.

## **MAKE IT WORK FOR YOUR CHILD**

Our activities are ideas, not rules. Pick which ones you think are appropriate for your child, and adapt the ones you think are not going to work for them right now. It's ok to leave some things out altogether, and try them another time.

- Questions: If your child is finding the questions too hard, try just asking the top one or two. These tend to be more about looking and finding, and single words, actions, or pointing are suitable answers.
- Retell activity: Focus on retelling the story using actions. Demonstrate the language.
- Words activity: Focus on one or two words only. Pick words which you think will be useful for your child, and that they may already know a little bit about. Leave out the ones you don't think are appropriate.

## **BE POSITIVE AND ENCOURAGING:**

Warm, responsive parent attitudes are proven to be important for children's language development. Listen carefully to your child and respond positively to what they say or do, even if it wasn't quite what you expected.

Try to avoid telling them they've got it wrong. Instead you could say something like "yes that one is a dog, and this one is a cat. Cat, cat, sleepy cat".

## **PRAISE**

Always find something positive to say "well done" for. It doesn't matter how small, remember to find some positives e.g. "*thank you for reading with me*".

**If you continue to be concerned, contact your local Speech and Language Therapist for strategies that help your child and their current goals.**

**Or, contact the Craniofacial Speech and Language Therapy team for support.**

**01865 234041**