

If your child is between 30-50 months, try doing these things together...

To support your child's listening skills and attention:

Follow my leader: Play 'Follow my Leader' getting your child to copy your actions. Then try asking them to be the leader and copy their actions.

Clap along: Sing or listen to songs and clap along together.

What comes next? When you are reading a familiar story with your child, try stopping just before something exciting happens and ask them what they think is going to happen next.

Talk time: It is good to find a quiet time to talk together but don't forget that you can chat when you are enjoying active games like running and jumping in the park.

What can I hear? Stop for a minute and listen together for what you can hear.

To support your child's understanding of language:

What's in the box? Find a few familiar objects and hide them in a box or under some fabric so your child cannot see them. Choose an object and describe using interesting words and see if they can guess what it is such as rough/smooth, furry, spiky, round or hard/soft.

I wonder... Begin to ask simple questions to help your child to think about how and why things happen such as "I wonder how we can get this table clean?"

Where are you? Try to use words like 'on', 'through' or 'behind', as your child moves around; for example at the park say "Look you're going through the tunnel."

To support your child's talking skills:

Treasure: Keep interesting objects that you might otherwise throw out such as old watches, hair accessories, scarves, shells, buttons and pine cones and put them in a box. Enjoy looking through the box with your child and talk about them; for example "I really like this bumpy, jagged shell." This will help increase your child's vocabulary.

You play role play: Play with your child in imaginary situations; for example they are a shop keeper and you are a customer or they are a vet and you are taking their animals (toys) to be treated. Try making pretend 'houses' or dens for explorers out of simple household items such as boxes, sheets and clothes airers. This is a great thing to do indoors and outdoors.

Feely bags: Find a bag, place an object in the bag and ask your child to describe it without looking at the object.

To support your child's social communication skills:

Talk to others: Try to give your child as many opportunities to talk in different situations and to different people. Remember children might need up to 12 seconds to respond!

Choices: Try to give your child opportunities to make their own choices; for example at breakfast ask them if they would like cereal or toast. Involve them in solving problems; for example "Oh no! We've run out of cereal so what shall we do?"

Phone and talk: Help your child speak to familiar people on the phone such as a grandparent. Get them to talk about that they have done and encourage them to listen to the person on the other end.

If your child is between 40-60 months, try doing these things together...

To support your child's listening skills and attention:

Off to the shops: Write a list before you go shopping (your child can play at writing their own list too). When you are out you can ask your child to be 'in charge' of the list and help you find things from the shelves.

Story time: When reading and telling familiar stories with your child, pause as you read and talk with them about what has happened and what might happen next. You can bring stories to life by finding familiar objects from the story and using them to re-tell the story; for example for 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' find a doll or a bear or a bowl.

To support your child's understanding of language:

Grow my vocabulary: When you are playing with your child, find opportunities to introduce describing and doing words like enormous, huge, tiny, prickly, creeping or hopping. Your child will find it easier to understand new words when they are a part of play or an outing such as "I can see you crawling through the tunnel" or "You're right, it's a black dog and it's got a curly tail."

Word play: your child is beginning to have a sense of humour so have fun making up nonsense rhymes and sharing simple jokes.

Sort it out: Gather together a group of objects and ask your child to sort them with you in different ways; for example a horse, a bear, a scarf, a shoe and a bag. Remember there are different ways to sort; for example by size, colour of things that go together. The important thing is to talk to your child about how you have sorted together.

Talking story: Tell your child familiar or made up stories without using a book.

To support your child's talking skills:

Update: When you have spent time away from your child, ask them to tell you about what they have been doing; for example "What did you do at Granny's today?" They may need some prompting.

Planning the day: Talk to your child about what you are going to do today; for example "Let's get dressed and then have breakfast and then got to the shops." Involve your child in choosing snacks to take with you or jobs you need to do before you leave such as hanging out the washing.

Word play: Think of words that begin with the same sound; for example 'Seven, silly sausages.' Have fun with real and made up words that rhyme such as 'school, rule, pool' and 'sig, squig, mig.'

To support your child's social communication skills:

Story play: Play alongside your child talking about what you are doing; for example, "I'll put a bridge over my train track here and then the people can get to the station."

Playing together: When playing with your child make up stories as you go such as "Here comes my train wheee, is it going to crash into yours?"