

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
 Helping your child to reach their potential



Communication tips for four year olds.

Many four year olds are confident communicators who speak clearly and fluently in long and complex sentences. If you are concerned that your child does not speak as well as they should or just want to help them get ready for success at school here are some ideas to help your child develop strong communication skills:

Four year olds should be able to:

- understand and use a wide variety of words
- construct sentences with joining words: and, then, so, but, because
- use most grammar correctly
- be able to hold a conversation
- be able to join in groups and play cooperatively with other children
- be able to describe something they have done in another time or place
- be able to retell a familiar story from a book
- be able to tell how to do something familiar with a number of steps
- follow instructions with a number of steps
- ask and answer who, why and how questions
- pronounce most words correctly



To develop your four year old's understanding try to talk at a level just above the level your child uses themselves. If your child uses sentences of five words, make yours just a little longer. Introduce new words and concepts as you talk with your child. Repeat the new word or idea a number of times to help your child learn and remember. Use the new word in different settings so that your child develops a deeper understanding of the word.

To develop your four year olds use of language repeat back their sentences to them now and then fixing up any mistakes. "I've got cold **foots**" "Cold **feet**, oh no let get some warm socks". This will help them gradually learn adult grammar and pronunciation. Gently emphasize your change but make sure you also sound interested and positive. Also add extra words and ideas to what your child says; "I found a **sock**" "You found a **long, stripped sock**, let's find another one to match, let's find another **long, stripped sock**". Most importantly listen to what your child has to say and make talking together a positive time for both of you.



Ideas for developing language skills

Play word games such as: “I went to the shop and I bought” Each person must repeat what has previously been bought before adding their own to the list. If your child finds it difficult to remember what is said cut pictures from junk mail to make cards and turn over the cards in turn and name them as you play. Try variations such as I went to the zoo, jungle, park, beach etc.

Go for a walk and talk about the things you see. Collect things to bring home and keep such as: feathers, stones, leaves. Look at them closely maybe with a magnifying glass and talk about the colour, shape, texture, size and weight of each thing.

Play hide and seek with toy animals or dolls. Once they are found talk about who was found where i.e.: “The horse was under the big, blue chair”. Use lots of describing and position words.

Make some sequence cards. Use a digital camera to take a series of photos of your child doing familiar activities such as brushing their teeth or making toast. Print them out, cut them up and see if your child can put them in order and tell you what they are doing. Once familiar activities are easy for your child use more complex activities and take more pictures, such as craft and cooking activities.

Make your own books. Take your camera along on an outing and take a series of photos through the day. When you come home print them out and slip into a mini photo album. With your child write a sentence or two for each picture. Use a story beginning structure of “when, who and where” e.g. One day Max went to the beach” and an ending structure with a feeling word or two “at night-time Max went home feeling happy and tired”. Write your story in past tense and use some feeling words, describing words and direct speech “Max said “Wow”. These will help your child understand how stories are structured, an important pre-literacy skill.



For more ideas on developing children’s language skills visit the “plus” section of the Talking Matters website <http://plus.talkingmatters.com.au/>.