



Health  
South Western Sydney  
Local Health District

# Preparing Little Talkers for School



## Speech Pathology Information Package

This package contains some activities to help prepare your child for school. It includes information and ideas for:

- Speech sound development
- Listening to and answering questions
- Developing pre-reading skills
- Learning through books

### About the speech pathology service:

This package has been developed by Macarthur Community Health Speech Pathology. This service provides assessment and therapy for children with speech and language difficulties, such as:

- Difficulties comprehending language
- Difficulties with using sentences
- Speech sound difficulties
- Stuttering

### Referral information:

Please contact the Macarthur Community Health Speech Pathology intake line on 4633 4133 if you have concerns with any of the above. Referrals are accepted for children from birth until the end of Term 2 of Kindergarten.



# Back to Basics

There are many skills children need to develop to help them learn well at school. The following activities can help develop their skills at:

- Listening
- Concentrating
- Taking turns
- Organising their thoughts
- Using their memory
- Understanding rules



## Things to Try

### Games

Games can develop children's skills with taking turns, memory (e.g. rules), concentrating and listening:

- /// Play simple board games as a family and follow the rules as they are written.
- /// Introduce simple card games such as Snap and Go Fish.
- /// Play "memory" card games (i.e. pairs of cards are laid face down on the table. Turn over two cards to look for pairs. Add more cards to the game as your child gets better at remembering where they are located).



## Things to try

### Talking and Listening

- /// Spend time at the end of each day talking about what your child has done, e.g. 'Tell me one friend you played with and one game you liked at preschool today'. Encourage your child to ask questions about your day as well.
- /// Give 'jobs' at home that your child needs to listen to and remember, such as:

- Setting the table
- Packing away toys
- Folding or hanging clothes
- Taking out the garbage



- /// Praise your child for listening when they have followed your instructions correctly. E.g. "Put out all the cups then the plates" or "Hang up two black socks using red pegs".
- /// Spend time talking about past events such as birthday parties, Christmas, holiday trips or family get togethers. Use photos from the event to talk about who was there and what happened.
- /// Draw your child's attention to sounds that occur during the day and talk about what they can hear and where it could be coming from, e.g. kookaburra, an aeroplane, a garbage truck, etc.







# Using Speech Sounds

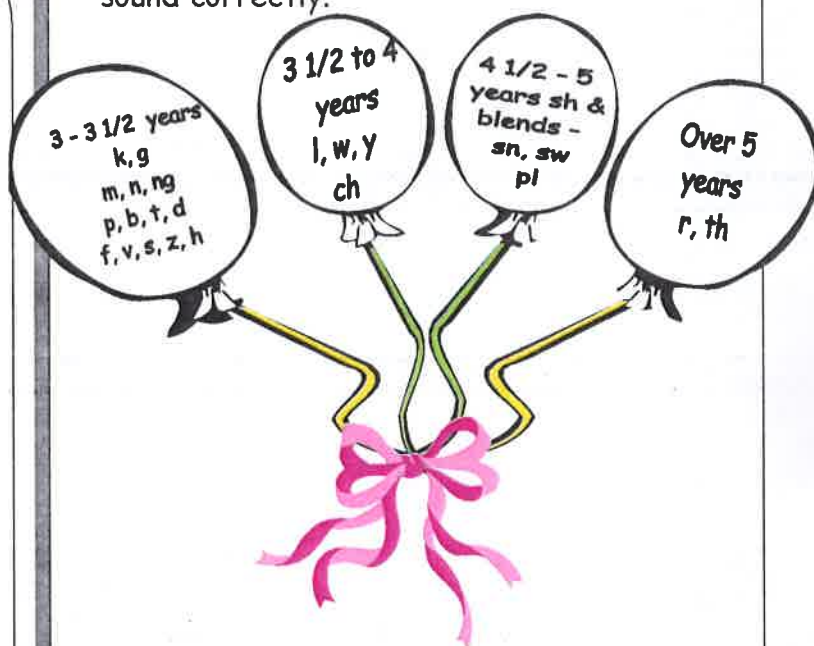
It is important for your child to be using correct speech sounds when they start school. Saying these sounds correctly also helps your child when learning to read and spell new words.

## Things to think about

- By the time your child starts Kindergarten, their speech should be easily understood by people who don't know them or do not see them often.
- When your child starts school they may still have difficulty saying some sounds correctly, e.g. "fum" for "thumb". You can encourage your child to copy these sounds after you.
- Before your child starts school, practice sounds that are important to them, e.g. the sounds in their name.
- You can encourage correct speech sounds by playing word games, e.g. "I spy", or other games suggested in the "Getting ready to read" handout.
- Has your child's hearing been checked? Children who suffer from lots of colds, asthma and ear infections may have a hearing loss for a short period of time. This can affect the way they hear and say their sounds.

## When should my child be saying their sounds correctly?

Children learn to say different sounds at different ages - see the balloons below. These give you an approximate age by which most children are able to say each sound correctly.



If you are concerned about the way your child says their speech sounds, write down the words they are having difficulty with and contact the Macarthur Community Health Speech Pathology Intake.

## For further information

- Contact a speech pathologist in Macarthur on 4633 4133.
- To arrange a hearing test, contact your local community health centre.



# Getting Ready to Read

In Kindergarten your child will begin to read. Before they start school it is useful if they can:

- Talk about letters and focus on the sounds they make
- Recognise some letters, e.g. the first letter of their name
- Know about rhyming words, e.g. cat, hat, mat...
- Work out the first sound in a word, e.g. pig starts with the sound 'p'
- Clap out the 'beats' in a word, e.g. cat-er-pi-llar



## Things to Try

### Home Activities

- Read books before bedtime with rhyming words such as 'Cat in the Hat'. Talk about which words sound the same at the end (cat, mat, hat etc).
- Sing simple nursery rhymes together, e.g. 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'Humpty Dumpty' Point out the rhyming words.
- Encourage your child to play with magnetic or foam letters on the fridge or at bath time and talk about the sounds.
- Try playing the board game over the page to practice some of the following skills:

## Things to try

- Choose a sound to focus on each week. Cut and paste pictures from magazines or shopping catalogues that start with that sound. Point out people's names, food items or things in the house that start with that sound.
- 'I Spy' with sounds, e.g. "I spy something you play with beginning with the sound 'b' - "ball" or "I spy something that starts with the 'sh' sound - shoe". Remember to focus on the *sound* of the letter, not the name.
- At dinner time clap out the 'beats' in everyone's name, e.g. 'Mum-my', 'Dad-dy', 'Nich-o-las'.



### Car Games

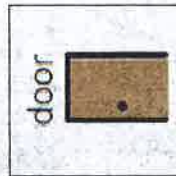
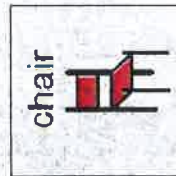
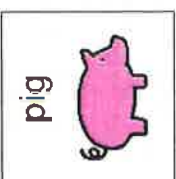
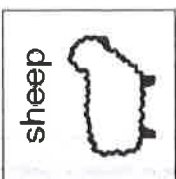
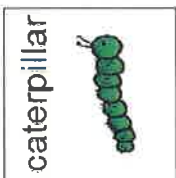
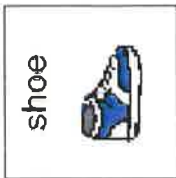
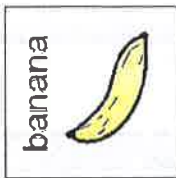
- 'I Spy' with sounds, e.g. "I spy an animal beginning with the sound 'sh' - sheep".
- Guessing games with initial sound and/or a rhyming word as a clue, e.g. "I'm thinking of a toy that starts with 'b' and rhymes with 'wall' and 'fall' - ball".
- Take turns making up rhyming words such as 'pig, big, lig, gig'. If they get stuck give them extra clues such as 'what about a pink animal that says oink'.



## For further information

- Contact a speech pathologist in Macarthur on 4633 4133.





**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Each player has a counter and puts it on the 'start' star.

To move forward along the board you can either roll a dice or the child can move forward their age (eg. if they are 4 and they get the answer correct, they move forward 4 places).

To move around the board, when you land on each picture you can do one of the following:

**Syllable clapping:**

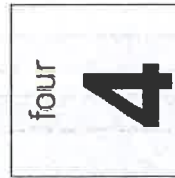
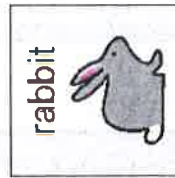
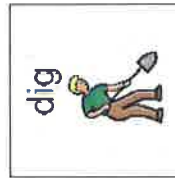
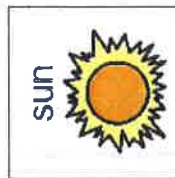
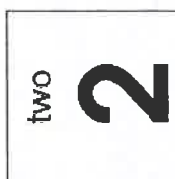
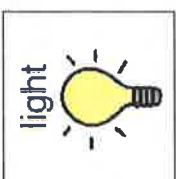
Clap out the number of beats in the words (eg. banana - ba-na-na).

**Rhyming words:**

If your child lands on a picture that has a rhyming word on the board, see if they can find a picture/word that rhymes or guess the word that rhymes (eg. 'bear' - does 'bear' rhyme with 'sun' or 'chair'?).

**Starting sounds in words:**

Ask your child to tell you the first sound in the word (eg. What's the first sound in 'rabbit'?) or give them a choice of sounds (eg. 'Does 'rabbit' start with 'r' or 'p'?).





# Answering Questions

Being able to answer questions allows you to:

- Interact and have conversations with people
- Correctly follow instructions or directions
- Participate in news and story time at school

## Things to think about

- /// Make sure you have your child's attention before asking them a question. Call them by name and ensure you have eye contact.
- /// Be aware that some types of questions are harder to answer than others. E.g. Questions needing a yes/no answer (e.g. "Do you like chocolate?") are easier to answer than questions that can have more than one answer (e.g. "What do you think will happen next in the story?").
- /// Focus on questions relating to your child, e.g. "What is your name?", "How old are you?", "When is your birthday?" etc.

## Things to Try

- /// Repeat the question more than once.
- /// Give your child a choice of answers, e.g. "Did we go to the beach or the pool?".



## Things to try

- /// Make general questions more specific by breaking them into shorter ones. E.g. "Where did we go with Nan and what did we see?" → "What did you do with Nan?"
- /// Explain the meaning of different question words (i.e. "wh-" words) to your child and discuss what they mean, e.g.:
  - 'who?' asks about a person or animal (e.g. "Who's that?" - "dad");
  - 'what?' asks about a object, idea or action (e.g. "What's he doing?" - "running");
  - 'when?' asks about a time (e.g. "When did you go to the shops?" - "morning" or days of the week etc);
  - 'where?' asks about a place (e.g. "Where did you go?" - "school", "shops", "home");
  - 'why?' asks for a reason (e.g. "Why did the girl start to cry?")
  - 'how?' asks the way it was done (e.g. "How did you get to the shops?").
- /// After reading a story, ask your child a variety of "wh-" questions, e.g. "Who climbed the tree?", "What happened when his mum came?", or "Where was the duck hiding?" Point to the pictures in the story as you ask these questions. This will help your child link the question with the answer.





- Answer the questions yourself if your child is having difficulty. Your child will learn from hearing how you answer the question, e.g. "Where did we go today? ... We went to the shops with Auntie Jill."
- Play games to practise asking and answering questions, e.g. 'Who Am I?' (e.g. "Does my person have brown hair?" or "Am I a furry animal?" etc) and 'I Spy'.

## Levels of Questions

- By the time your child starts school, they should be able to easily answer questions in levels 1, 2 and 3, and be developing their skills with harder questions (level 4).
- The following levels of questions below can be practiced through books and in conversation. Question types range from simple to more difficult. Note what questions your child may have difficulty with and concentrate on building their skills at that level.
- Remember to balance the number of questions you ask with lots of comments. Refer to the handout "Learning through Books" for more information.

### Level 1:

- Find one like this...
- Find the...
- Show me what you saw
- What did you see?
- What's this?
- Who is that?



## Levels of Questions

### Level 2:

- Which one can we eat?
- Find one that can...
- What do we use a ... for?
- What is happening here?
- Finish this 'the boy is...'
- What colour is it?
- What parts does it have?
- What noise does it make?
- How are these different?
- Tell me something else that is a...



### Level 3:

- Find one to use with that...
- What will happen next?
- What could he say?
- Tell me what happened...
- How are these the same?
- Tell me something that is not... (characteristic, e.g. colour/shape)
- Tell me something that is not a... (category, e.g. animal/food etc)
- What is a...? (definition)

### Level 4:

- Where will...?
- What will happen if...?
- Why wouldn't it...?
- Why would it...?
- Why will...?
- What made it happen?
- What could he do?
- What could she use?
- Why is...made of ...?
- How can we tell...?

## For further information

- Contact a speech pathologist in Macarthur on 4633 4133.
- Refer to the handout "Learning through Books".



# Learning through Books

Reading to your child helps them to:

- Understand and learn new words and ideas
- Ask and answer questions
- Develop listening skills and attention
- Learn to take turns
- Understand the parts in a story
- Develop an interest in reading

## Things to think about

- Choose a book that your child is interested in (e.g. pop up books, books about cars or dinosaurs, etc), that has lots of pictures and only a few sentences per page.
- Try to read to your child everyday. You might try reading at a special time and in a quiet place (e.g. before bed without the television on). Encourage them to tell you the story back using the pictures to help them.
- Children learn that books are important from watching others reading. Involve your child in reading magazines, recipe books etc that you are interested in too.
- Introduce your child to the local library and make regular visits together.



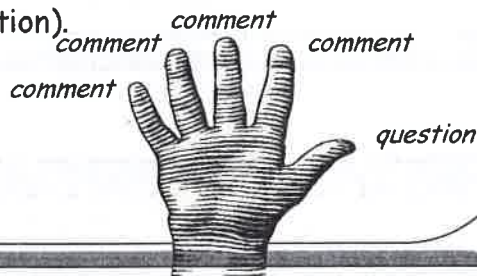
## Things to try

- When you read with your child...
  - Point out the front and back of the book; Read the title and discuss what the book might be about.
  - Point to the words and pictures on the pages as you read.
- Try the "5 Finger Strategy" - this is an easy way to help your child link the information from the pictures with the words you are reading.

To share information with your child, comment on 4 things within the picture, then ask your child 1 question;

### Example

- "The caterpillar ate a chocolate cake" (comment 1);
- "Look at that rough, green pickle" (comment 2);
- "I like swirly lollipops" (comment 3).
- "Uh-oh, the caterpillar looks so sick!" (comment 4);
- "Why do you think he feels sick?" (question).



## For further information

- Contact a speech pathologist in Macarthur on 4633 4133.
- Refer to the "Answering Questions" handout.