



Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet.

How to support children with Language Difficulties at home.

Approximately 1.9 million children in the UK have some difficulty with speech, language and communication. Up to 7.6% of children meet the criteria for a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). Others may have general language difficulties, which can still make listening, understanding, and talking difficult for them.

This advice sheet is for parents/carers who are worried about their child's language needs.

It includes information to support a child who might be struggling with the following areas:

- Is your child able to understand words and sentences? For example, can they answer questions and follow verbal instructions?
- Is your child starting to use words and sentences (this can depend on a child's age)? For example, do they put words in the right order, use the right words and use correct grammar?
- Is your child able to pay attention and listen to what others say in a conversation?
- Is your child using language in social situations with other children? For example, during play.

Keep language clear and simple.

- If your child is using short phrases, try to use phrases of a similar length when you need to give instructions.
- Check in with your child to make sure they understand.
- Model back your child's language by using correct vocabulary and grammar. (There's no need to point out the mistake directly as this may make them feel self-conscious. Hearing the correct version of what they want to say can be helpful.)
- Make sure your child knows it's okay to make mistakes and give them lots of extra time to respond.

What is "clear" language?

"Breakfast is finished. It's time for a walk"

Try and give information in the order it will happen. This is easier to understand. For example:

"Let's brush our teeth and then it's story time"

What is modelling?

Child: I wrote a story in my thingy

Adult: Ah yes, you wrote a story in your book.

Regular routines can help your child feel supported.

- Routines around morning, mealtimes and bedtime can help children know what to expect which will help reduce anxiety
- Support your routines with visual reminders, for example: symbols, drawings or photos
- Routine "songs" can also be helpful – for example, 'this is the way we wash our hands'
- This can help prompt your child and supports their understanding.

Getting ready for bed.



We put on our pyjamas.



We brush our teeth.



We wash our faces.



Dad reads me a story.



Dad turns out the light.



I go to sleep.

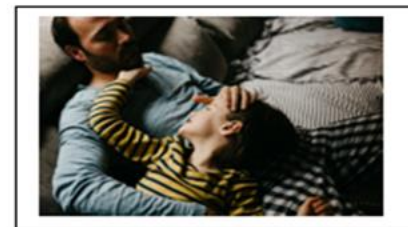
Create opportunities to talk together. (Talking Time)

Noisy, loud environments might be difficult for your child. This is because hearing conversations with lots of speakers at once can be overwhelming for some children. Background noise can also be distracting when you need to focus more on speaking and listening than other people do.

If you can, create a quiet space where you and your child can interact together. (This could be at bedtime or as part of an evening routine).

Make sure both you and your child are focused on your conversation together. Help your child feel listened to, by tuning in to the way they communicate. Sometimes, children might choose to communicate in ways other than talking. For example:

- Gesture & pointing
- Finding different words to explain what they want to say.
- Using body language
- Signing (if you and your child use Makaton together).



These are all ways a child might want to talk with you. Respecting this can help them feel safe and encourage them to communicate. However you and your child choose to communicate together, and whatever that looks like for you, is valid. You know your child best, and connecting with them in these moments, in a way that feels comfortable for them, will help them to know that they are safe, supported and valued for who they are.

NHS Services:

- You can find further information and support on [our website](https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/speech-and-language-therapy/). <https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/speech-and-language-therapy/>
- You can contact us on our 'Request for Help' line (see [our website](#) for further details).
- You can also learn more at [NHS Start for life](#).

Where else can I go for information and support?

If you want general support and resources for speech, language and communication in children 5 and under check out [Tiny Happy People](#).

If you are worried about your child's speech, language or communication and want to find out more, take a look at Speech and Language UK* [progress tracker](https://progress-checker.speechandlanguage.org.uk/). <https://progress-checker.speechandlanguage.org.uk/>

(*Speech and Language UK is an independent speech therapy charity. The progress checker is not intended as diagnostic tool).

If you want to know more about Developmental Language Disorder, take a look at [DLD and Me](#), an online resource for parents/carers and children and young people.