



Tuesday

Healthy Body, Happy Me 2022

Talking Tuesday



Talking Tuesday

“The child begins to perceive the world not only through their eyes, but also through his speech.” (Vygotsky, 1978).

Language and communication skills are essential in the development of children who are ready to learn and thrive in nursery and beyond. Children’s self-regulation skills are directly linked to their language development. These skills include being able to manage strong feelings, think flexibly, concentrate, plan and show resilience when things get difficult; all of which are essential traits in children being happy and healthy.

Communication skills are crucial to a child’s life chances in later life – including outcomes for their mental health (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2019). A child’s language skills at the age of two can predict their ability in reading, writing and maths when they start school (Snowling et al, 2012). Children from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have poor language skills than their peers from high socio-economic backgrounds (Ican 2009). In some areas, up to 50% of children are entering school with impoverished language skills. This means children may use shorter sentences, display unclear speech, use a small vocabulary and only be able to understand simple instructions. What is clear is that early intervention and access to a language-rich environment with skilled practitioners can close this gap.

So, what are the skills we need to teach children so that they can communicate effectively?

Children need to be able to hold a conversation. This entails being able to interpret what the other person is saying, think of their own response and check they have been understood. It’s important to hold conversations where children feel most comfortable, talk to children about their particular interests and be tuned into what the child is saying.

Building a wide vocabulary is key to their language and communication skillset. Effective language development is rooted in real life experiences. Consider what words children might like to learn and what vocabulary they need to share ideas and build relationships.

Help children to interpret the information they are receiving, from the earliest serve and return of gestures as babies to engaging in conflict resolution as a pre-schooler. Providing contexts which are meaningful to the child gives them real motivation to listen and attend.



Activity 1 Talking tub: getting better

Talking tubs are a great way of getting children to talk and make sense of the world around them. It is an inclusive activity that can support all children with their speech skills, including children who have English as an additional language and those who need more support with their attention and listening skills, or who have limited experience of language.

Talking tub: getting better

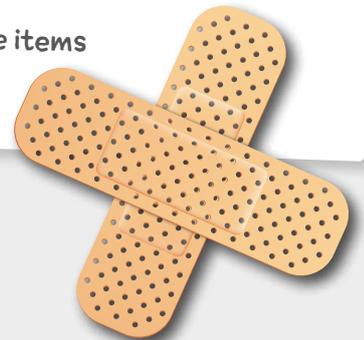
Activity outline

- This is an adult-led activity which takes place with a small group of children. Ideally, this activity would take place in a quiet, distraction-free area
- Provide time for children to explore the items in the tub and talk. Children can take the items out and try on the dressing-up clothes. Encourage them to talk about their own experiences. E.g. when they had a plaster on their knee after a fall
- Name the items for the children, such as plaster or bandage
- Once the children have had time to explore, ask them to sit in a circle and each child to choose their own teddy bear or doll
- Ask the children to sit their doll on their lap to help them listen to what they are going to do
- Ask the children to “put a plaster on baby’s arm”
- If children don’t respond, repeat the instruction. Use gestures to accompany your instruction if some children are struggling to understand or break down the instruction further. E.g. “pick up the plaster”
- Challenge the children by asking them to put plasters on different body parts, such as chin or knee.



Resources

- Teddy bears or dolls – enough for one each
- Plasters – home made with sticky tape/sticky back plastic and tissue or masking tape
- Optional – doctor or nurse role play outfit or old white adult shirts
- Tub for the items
- Bandages.



Learning opportunities include:

- Developing children’s understanding – receptive language skills
- Learning new vocabulary through known experiences
- Listening and attention skills.



Activity 1 Continued...

Extension ideas

Give the children two things to put on their doll in one instruction. E.g. a plaster on baby's toes and a bandage on their knee.

Ask the children to give you a two-part instruction. You could make a mistake which they can check and correct.

Consider leaving this activity available as part of your continuous provision for children to consolidate and extend their learning through free-play.

Ideas for different ages



For babies and toddlers, provide the same tub of resources (removing the plasters as they would not be safe for this age group to play with). Provide an extended time for babies or toddlers to explore the tub. Label and narrate or comment on their actions, "Samina is stroking baby's head" or "Ruth is feeling the bandages - they are soft."

Include books about the topic to share, such as "Peppa Pig Loves Doctors and Nurses."



Reading



Activity 2 Story cubes

Story cubes offer children a framework to express their ideas and imaginings. The cubes can provide inspiration and a stimulus for even the most reluctant communicators.

Story cubes

Activity outline

- Include the children in making the story cubes. Consult with them about what they would like on the cubes. Some themes include: superheroes, fairy tales, pirates, festivals or birthdays
- Create two cubes using the nets. One is for the characters and the other for setting/location
- Work with a small group of children in a quiet space. Explain that you are going to make up a story together using the cubes. The first one is for characters and the other one is to help decide where the story takes place
- Invite the children to roll the character cube first. Ask “who is that?” and value their interpretation
- Invite a different child to roll the setting cube - “where does our story take place?”
- Decide with the children how you will create the story. This could be through role play, drawing or using small world play figures
- Use sustained shared thinking techniques to develop the story with the children
- Sustained shared thinking can be what you do or what you say. Prompts can include:
 - Observe and tune into what the child is saying or doing
 - Give your full attention to the child
 - Smile and maintain eye contact
 - Recap the children’s ideas
 - Clarify their ideas e.g. ‘So you think...’
 - Offering an alternative viewpoint e.g. ‘I wonder if the bear just wanted a friend...’
- Roll the cubes again to create new stories. Keeping the group small will mean all children have a chance to actively participate. Also, you can easily change the cubes to reflect their particular interests, providing them with real motivation to talk.

Resources

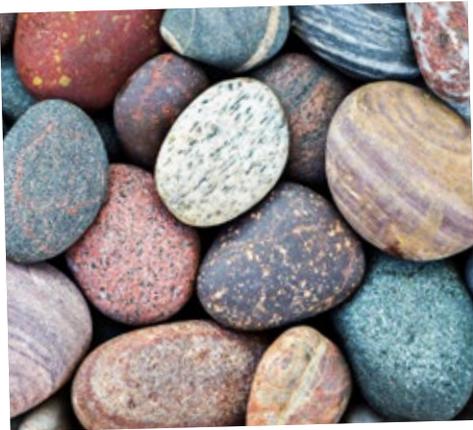
- Glue
- Pens
- Large sheets of paper
- Dressing-up resources or fabric that can encourage open-ended role play
- Pictures for the cube (cut from magazines, printed from online or create your own)
- 2 x net of a cube on paper or card (templates readily available).

Learning opportunities include:

- Using imagination to create or retell a story
- Developing a larger vocabulary
- Using talk to organise their ideas in play
- Responding to open-ended questions (why/how)
- Using longer sentences



Activity 2 Continued...



Collecting story stones



Ideas for different ages

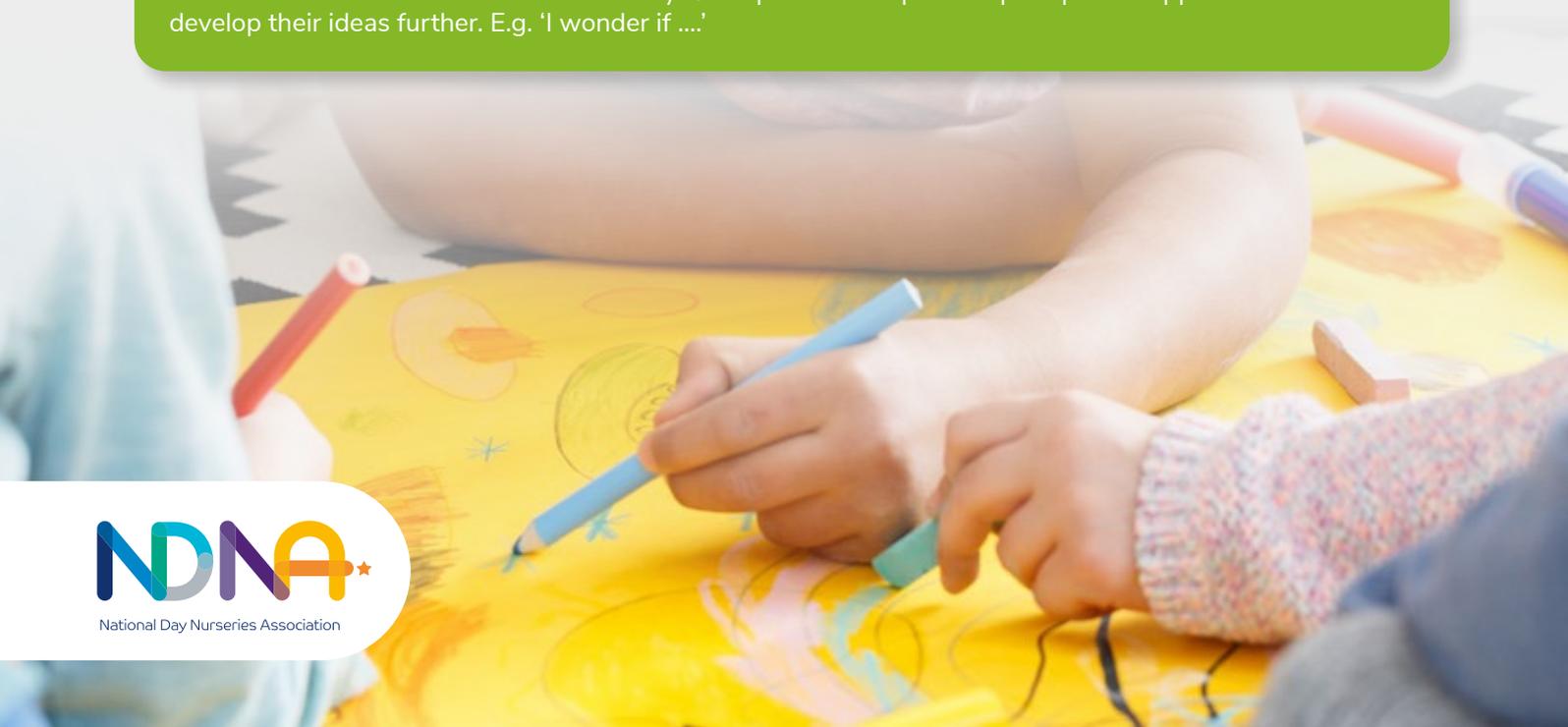
Stick pictures relevant to the children onto large, smooth stones and hide them in sand, coloured rice or lentils. Provide scoops or spoons and model finding the stones. Encourage the children to hunt for the stones. When they find one, name it for the child. Observe and see which pictures the children respond to. Build on to these interests through sharing relevant books or small world play figures.

Create feely bags related to different stones. For example, for a snowman stone, place objects in the bag, such as a snowman, a carrot and a hat. Encourage the use of single words to describe what they discover, such as 'hard' or 'pointy.'

Extension ideas

Consider adding another cube that shows what props the character has. E.g. in a fairy tale theme, you could include a sword, wand or treasure chest.

Explain to the children that you would like to record their story. Provide them with a large sheet of paper stuck on the ground or table and a variety of tools to draw with. Encourage them to draw pictures to depict the main events and character in their story. Use open-ended question prompts to support children to develop their ideas further. E.g. 'I wonder if'



Activity 3 Paper bag puppets

Communication and language development hinges on giving children lots of opportunities to express themselves and to speak and listen in a range of situations. Using and creating puppets in pairs is a great context for children to express themselves and show an awareness of their listener's needs.

Paper bag puppets

Activity outline

- Explain to the children that they are going to work in pairs or groups to create puppet pairs and/or families. These puppets can have some of the same features (or completely different if the children prefer)
- The children work with a partner and talk about their puppet pair
- Each child has a paper bag and materials for creating the puppet
- Ensure the paper bag is laid flat on the table with the open end facing the artist. The rectangular flap of the bag needs to be facing upwards and at the top of the bag
- The children need to start with the eyes, talking together to try to agree on the colour and what materials they will use. For example, using bottle tops and tissue paper rolled up inside to create the iris and pupil. Remind children to add eyebrows
- The children will then need to lift the flap carefully to draw or create a tongue for their puppet. Remind them again to chat with each other about their choice and decide whether they will make them matching or different
- Adding wool for hair is a discussion point – allow the children to decide and cut their own lengths as this will facilitate more language opportunities
- To use the puppet, the child places their hand into the bag and their fingers in the flap. They move their fingers up and down to make their puppet 'talk'
- The purpose of this is not necessarily for children to create identical puppets but to discuss their choices with one another whilst they make their creations.

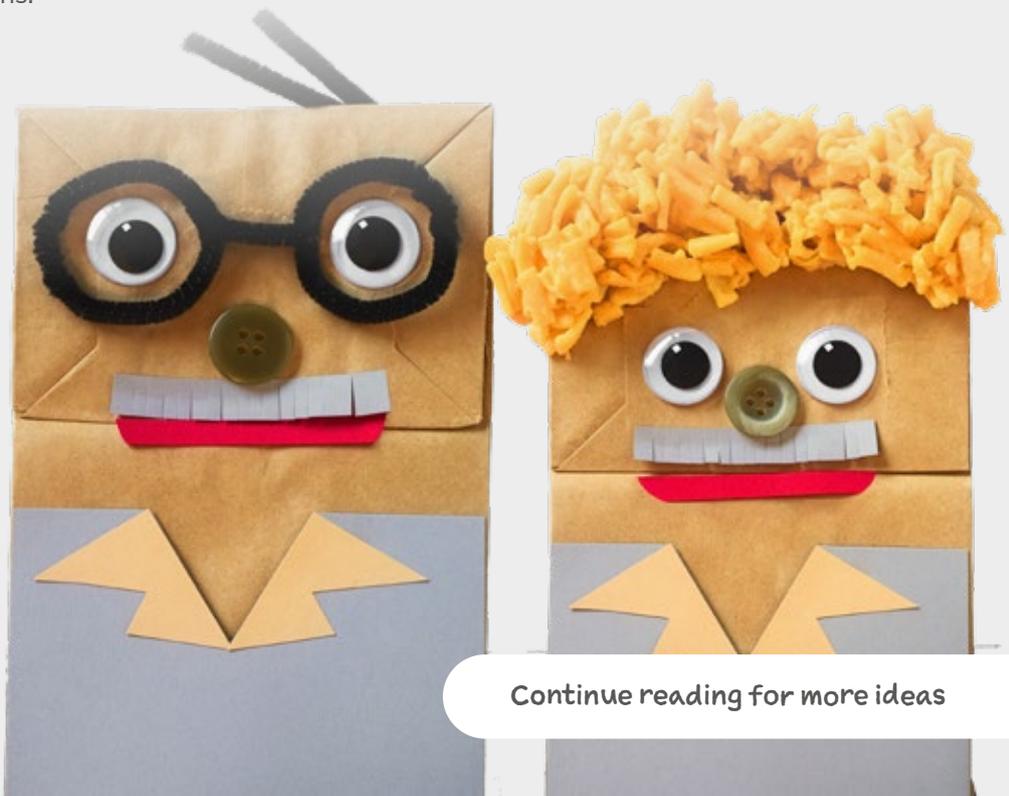


Resources

- Glue
- Wool
- Bottle tops
- Fabric scraps
- Tissue paper
- Crayons, paint or felt tip pens
- Paper bag with a rectangular base. Choose a small size to make it easier for the children to manipulate.

Learning opportunities include:

- Speaking in longer sentences
- Using language to share thoughts
- Visualising, making decisions and choices
- Listening and responding to ideas and instructions.



Activity 3 Continued...

Extension ideas

Make a puppet theatre using a cardboard box, fabric and a table.

Use the same technique to create characters from familiar stories to be used by children for retelling stories to one another.

Make puppets of familiar characters or family members from wooden spoons and lolly pop sticks.



Making lolly pop stick puppets

Ideas for different ages



Provide soft surface mirrors for babies and toddlers to look at themselves. Sit with them and name the different parts of their face, adding detail, such as, eye colour when narrating for them. If you sit the baby on your lap, you can share the mirror. This is a lovely chance to make different faces and label the emotions you are showing. Label any spontaneous emotions the baby shows, such as "Hanifa is laughing - she looks happy."

Use soft puppets during play and story times to re-enact parts of the stories and songs. Model talking to the puppets and encourage children to interact with them through non-verbal (touch) and verbal communication.

Place a mirror on an activity centre for non-mobile babies so they can look at themselves. Place a mirror for older babies out of reach so they can reach or roll for it when they have tummy time.



Activity 4 Active activity: A walk in the park

Carefully considering topics that young children can easily relate to will ensure that language development is at the heart of practice in your setting. Being active at the same time is a winning combination to engage children. This activity focuses on experiences most children will have, such as visiting a park and using the playground. You can harness this experience to develop their communication skills by sharing familiar topics.

Active activity: A walk in the park

Activity outline

- Introduce this to children as an adult-led activity with a small group. When the children become familiar with the resources and routine, you can use with a larger group during circle time or leave the resources available for the children to explore independently
- Place the laminated cards or objects in a bag. Pass the bag around and sing the following song to the tune of 'The Farmer's in His Den':
'Pass the bag along,
Pass the bag along,
Eee ai adio,
Pass the bag along'
- When the song finishes, the child holding the bag chooses a card from inside. Ask the child to hold up the card and tell children what you can see. Model the action for the children, making some of the sounds you might hear associated with the action
- Familiarise the babies and toddlers with a wide range of songs and nursery rhymes which promote them being active and are linked with the action cards. For example: 'The Wheels on the Bus' could be changed to 'the wheels on my bike go round and round' and the hopping card could link to 'hop little bunnies hop, hop, hop'
- Consider adding more items into the bag to represent children's favourite songs, such as animal figures, star shapes and different toy vehicles.



Resources

- Bag
- Laminated cards of playground actions including:
 - Skipping
 - Climbing
 - Walking a dog
 - Roundabout
 - Riding a bicycle
 - Playing on the swings
 - Walking
 - Running
 - Using the slide
 - See-saw.

Learning opportunities include:

- Listen and attend to their peers
- Sing a large repertoire of songs
- Understand a two-part instruction
- Express their ideas in longer sentences of four to six words.



Circle time in the park

Activity 4 Continued...



Extension ideas

Children can decide on their own things to add to the bag – give them a range to choose from if needed.

Go on a trip to extend children's experiences of different animals or vehicles. For example, the local animal park or farm to look at how animals move and what sounds they make.



Ideas for different ages

Older children can pick a card and perform the actions on the card for the other children to guess. Encourage the other children to join in so they are as active and engaged as possible.

Working in pairs, one child selects the card from the bag and they go a short distance away from the main group. They hide the card from their friend and use a sentence to describe what they see and what action they want their friend to perform for the rest of the group. For example, "sliding down a steep slide." Their partner then acts this out to the rest of the group who have to describe what they see. Adults can model using descriptive language to add more detail, such as 'down a slippery/hard/long slide.'

Extend the activities shown on the cards once the children are confident with the core vocabulary. You could include other items your group are familiar with, such as a skate park, monkey bars or sandpit.



A trip to the farm



Visuals in the park

Take your children on a walk and use these cards to demonstrate activities which can take place in the park.



Riding a bicycle



Hopping



Walking the dog



Sliding down the slide



Playing on the swings



Climbing



Playing on the see-saw



Running



Skipping



Playing on the roundabout

Can you think of any more?

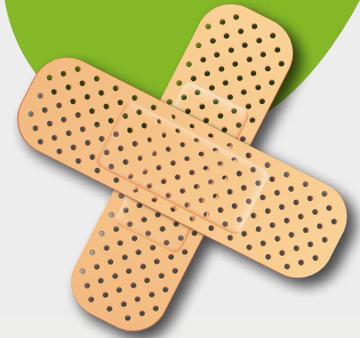
Further resources, links and stories:

Vocabulary and Early Language Skills course (NDNA)

Coming soon

Developing Literacy Superheroes publication (NDNA)

<https://bit.ly/3rS3xEO>



Getting creative



Having fun in the park



Learning about our bodies

National Day Nurseries Association

At NDNA, we don't just provide nursery membership, lobby government and offer training, we are dedicated to making a difference. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours. We enhance, support, nurture, cherish and challenge.

Every year we run an annual Healthy Body, Happy Me campaign to encourage better health and happiness by giving nurseries FREE resources for play, learning and fun.

Get involved with our 2022 campaign and help keep your children happy and healthy.

Important: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies. Children should always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials should always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.



National Day Nurseries Association

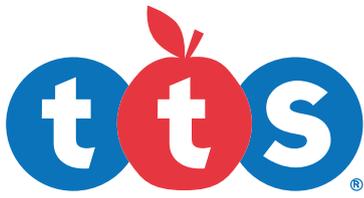
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