



STARS – Strategies Tips and Resources for Schools

Encouraging Early Language

STARS is a resource created to save you time and includes strategies, tips, methods and practical advice for supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This resource provides adaptable advice for both Primary and Secondary settings, catering to the needs of your school and students.

Encouraging Early Language Skills

General Advice

When playing and interacting with your child it is important to:

- Get down to your child's level to play, e.g. if they are sat on the floor you join them on the floor and make sure you are at their level, lie on the floor if you need too. Ensure that when you're at their level you are facing your child so they can see and hear you.
- Match their language level or build one more on what they say, e.g. 'driving train' or 'man driving train'. This models their language back with an additional word.
- Repeat the same word lots of time e.g. if the child is playing with building blocks, repeat the word blocks with lots of different descriptors 'big block', 'small block', 'red block' etc.
- Model early turn taking where you can play, listen and talk.
- Rather than ask questions and add pressure to their play, comment on what you're observing e.g. 'what a big tower your building!' rather than 'what are you building?'
- Expand on what your child says e.g. 'apple', you'd model back 'red apple'
- If questioning, give time to respond rather than expecting a quick response. Once given time if they don't respond give them the answer clearly.
- If your child has unclear speech accept their attempt and simply model it back to them clearly and correctly, e.g. if they say 'tar' model back 'yes, that is a car'.
- Offer options of toys to play with to allow them to make choices, offer the choices with the language so they can hear the words needed to repeat it back e.g. 'blocks or balls?'

Activities to help receptive language.

Children's understanding of language develops earlier than their expressive language. It is important to help them to understand language and you can do this by:



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- Use gestures whilst talking e.g. wave when you say 'hello/goodbye'.
- Give simple instructions to follow within the context they are in e.g. ask for one object out of a small selection which is in front of them.
- Use a clear voice and short, simple sentences when talking to them to ensure they hear you and are not overwhelmed with too much language
- When giving instructions give the instruction you want them to do rather than one you don't e.g. if they're running rather than saying 'stop running' saying 'good walking'. Children tend to hear the last word so ensure it is the positive one you want them to be doing.

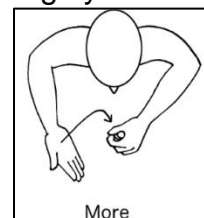
Naming Activities

- Play posting games, as you or the child post the objects into a box name the objects. You can start by naming them and then pause and see if the child will name them.
- Have a bag or box of toys, pull them out one at a time and see if your child can name the toy.
- Hide toys around the rooms and show them flashcards of what you want them to find, as they find the toy encourage them to name what they have found.
- When tidying up encourage naming what they're putting away.
- During story time name animals/objects that you see in the picture. Encourage them to point and say what they can see.
- Choose a word to work on that day, ensure it is motivating to the child and see what you can do with the toy and use the word as many times in different context e.g. 'dolly sleeping', 'dolly drinking', 'dolly eating'



Activities to Encourage 'more'

- If your child communicates, they want more of something by bringing you something that's empty, use the word 'more?' with a questioning tone of voice and pause, then give them more of that food, drink or toy. Encourage your child vocalise more.
- Model 'more' using a gesture or Makaton sign.
- During meal or snack times give your child a smaller amount than usual and see if they look or try to signal to communicate 'more'. You could also hold some of the extra snack so they can see there is more left.
- When playing a puzzle or game give them one piece or object at a time so they've to request 'more' to complete the puzzle or game. This can be done with anything motivating to your child e.g. bubbles, listening to music, blowing balloons, building towers, completing jigsaws etc. Ensure that you question 'more?' if they reach out or signal using a gesture.





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When teaching more you can also build this into developing a two-word phrase, e.g. 'more juice', 'more bubbles' etc.

Activities to Encourage 'gone'

- When a person is leaving the room, you can model waving bye and saying 'bye xxxx', and then once the person has left you can say 'xxxx gone'.
- When tidying away toys you can say 'all gone' or 'toys gone', encourage them to copy you too.
- When they have finished their meal, snack or drink you could model 'all gone'.

Activities to Encourage 'on/off'

- Encourage words by either you or the child switching things on or off, model the language clearly, e.g. 'lights on', 'music on', 'hoover on'.
- Encourage on or off whilst dressing or undressing 'shoes on', 'hat on', 'socks off' etc.
- Play a funny game of balancing something on your head and shaking it off e.g. 'hat on!' shake it off and say 'hat off' make the game silly and build anticipation using the tone of voice. Encourage the child to vocalise by pausing during the game.

Activities to Encourage 'go'

- Play 'ready, steady, go!' games, e.g. rolling cars or balls, blowing bubbles, running games etc. pause after 'ready, steady...' so the child can anticipate 'go!' and clearly see what 'go' means.
When your child is familiar is ready, steady, leave 'go' off the end of the sentence and see if you child can communicate it for the game to happen.

