

General tips for speech, language and communication development

- Ensure you put aside regular time to talk with your child, play games and read books together.
- When you have this 'special' time make sure that there are no distractions such as background noise from the television or radio. This will help you and your child to focus on the activity you are doing together.
- Too much background noise means your child stops trying to listen, as he can't pick out your voice easily.
- Swap watching TV or computer games, for story time, colouring or craft. If your child usually watches TV while you cook dinner, ask your child for help while you do this. Even if it is stirring, or setting the table.
- Make an effort to sit down at the table for dinner, without the television being on in the background. This will encourage communication development.
- Encourage pretend play, sing songs and nursery rhymes. Including action songs helps develop co-ordination and rhythm.
- Talk to your child about everyday activities, both during the event and afterwards. For example, a walk in the park, a trip to the shops, and even while you are doing jobs in the house.

Television and your Child

Information for parents about television and electronic games



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Excessive television and computer games

Evidence shows that children who watch too much television (TV), or spend hours playing electronic computer games are at higher risk of developing obesity. This is because these children are not as active as other children who do not spend as much time in front of the television or computer games.

But in addition to this physical risk, children watching too much television can spend less time communicating with parents, family members, siblings and friends as this is a solitary activity that does not require interaction.

Speech and language development and television

It is well known how important speech, language and communication development is during childhood. Children who spend excessive amounts of time watching television, and playing computer games are not experiencing natural two-way communication. This can impact on expressive language, speech sound development and learning to turn-take, ask questions.

However, we are not saying your child should not watch any TV. If used responsibly, it can be an educational tool to help support your child's speech, language and communication development.

What is the best advice concerning television?

There are many tips regarding television and your child.

Some television tips for parents:

- Be selective about what you allow your child to watch on television. Quality children's television often focuses on educational aspects and topics.
- When your child watches TV, it is good for you to sit down with him or her as well. This helps you monitor what your child is watching, but also allows you to be involved instead of it being a solitary activity
- Talk to your child about the TV programme you have just watched. Ask your child to re-tell the story to help develop his attention skills, remember, process information and express his thoughts into words.
- When you are out and about, try to encourage your child to talk about what he can see that was on TV earlier that day. This helps develop memory and language skills.
- Don't allow a TV in your child's bedroom. It might mean your child would watch TV late into the night and this may affect school and homework. It would be more beneficial to read a story to your child, or for older children to read a book themselves.

Computer tips

- If your child plays computer games, only allow him to play for a short period of time only.
- Play card and board games with your child instead of him always playing computer games. This supports communication and develops attention, and critical thinking.
- For older children, encourage them to finish their homework before they play a game. This ensures they are staying on top of their work, and acts as a reward afterwards.