

Communication and Language ideas

Activities to support speaking and
listening

Produced by The Early Years Quality
Improvement Team.





Communication is the foundation life skill. It affects our ability to learn, form relationships and make friends.

Yet...

1 in 6 children in the UK experience difficulty in learning to talk and communicate.

(YouGov Poll of 1,015 parents, 2010)

Speech and Language Intriguing Facts

• 1 in 6 children in the UK experience difficulty in learning to talk
(YouGov Poll of 1,015 parents, 2010)

• By age 5, 1 in 5 boys are struggling to read

Children who come from stable home environments receive **700,000** words of encouragement and **80,000** negatives.

Children who are from deprived backgrounds hear **60,000** words of encouragement and **120,000** negatives!

68% of children who struggle with language delay, also experience behavioural difficulties.

• The current average response time given to children by teachers/carers is 2.7 seconds.
(The appropriate time is 10-12 seconds)

How do children begin to use language?

Even before using the first words, a baby needs to:

- have a *need* to communicate with others
- hear language directed to him
- learn that the language he hears *means* something
- be able to *make the sounds* that eventually she will use to form words
- *pick out the differences* between the sounds he hears in the language around him
- have an adult who is *responsive* to meet these needs so that she learns that vocalisation has a purpose and will provoke a reaction.

The next step – one and two words... and beyond

- Understanding words have meaning
- Saying the first word
- Linking two and more words
- Putting words together in the right order
- Understanding and using the social rules of communication.

Positive Adult –Child

Interaction

Includes:



Gaining children's attention
before giving instructions

Encouraging the children to
ask questions

Modelling the correct sentence
when a child's incorrect
utterance is heard.

Simple, repetitive language
during everyday activities

Adapting language to the
level of the child's

Talking at an appropriate rate,
using short sentences

Extending the child's utterances
Introducing new vocabulary
in context

Positive Adult –Child

Interaction

Includes:



Giving children **Time** to process information and respond

Using natural gestures and Facial expressions to support language

Listening to children and Responding to what they say

Not directing a conversation by lots of questions

Giving a running commentary on the child's activity, rather than asking questions

Using vocabulary children can understand in everyday situations

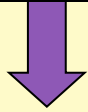
You are squeezing the dough.
Mine feels cold and sticky



Being a Play Partner

Create a context for conversation

Join children in play

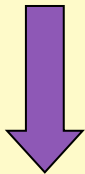


Follow the child's interests

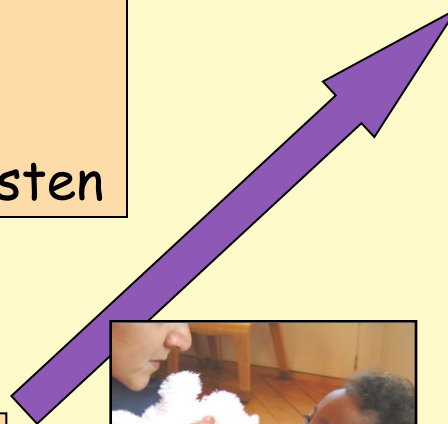
Sit face to face

OWL

Observe, Wait and Listen



Child says or
does something/
responds



Take turns with children
Give specific praise
Ask open questions
Give time for children to
respond

Adult responds by:

- Being at the child's level. (Physical, developmental and language level)
- Interpreting what the child is trying to say.
- Labelling/ Commenting
- Repeating back and extending
- Wait for the child to respond

Provide cosy spaces, where children can feel safe and relaxed and ready to chat.



An 'All About Me' box with objects and pictures of importance to an individual child can be a great way to get them talking – both to adults and other children as they tell you all about what is in their box and why



Cosy spaces don't need to be expensive to provide – even an old cardboard box can be a talk den.



Add objects or interesting collections to your cosy space to facilitate inquiry and discussion

Make sure you have resources that encourage children to explore the power of their voices.



Old mobile phones, microphones, walkie talkies and tubing all provide opportunities for children to explore how they can use their voices in different ways. Shouting through a long length of hose pipe to your friend at the other end is great fun



Walkie talkies...
Excellent for
speaking and
listening as well
as technology.
We loved playing
hide and seek
with them!

@Jessicawebb92
PPTCOLLAGE





Providing a stimulus as to who to call on your phone can support children in developing conversational language and in learning to ask good questions





Puppets - either home made or purchased are another resource that stimulates talk. Puppets can also help children to add intonation and effects to their voices, a skill that will be useful to their reading skills later on.

Learning to listen

In order to develop their communication skills children first need to learn to listen, this involves:

- Discrimination of sound – a foreground sound against background noise
- Social listening – looking at the person talking, remembering and responding to what is said, turn-taking in conversations
- Developing aural attention span
- Developing auditory memory – remembering songs and rhymes and keeping a steady beat.



Activities to Develop Auditory Awareness:

- What Made That Sound?
Instruments hidden from view – can they name them?
- Where is The Clock? –hide an alarm clock and can the children find it?
- Traffic lights – listening to and following instructions
- Prop Stories – encourage them to make sounds when you read stories such as 'Peace at last'
- Sound lotto – especially made with the children



Listening activities

Sound lotto

Singing

Poems and rhymes

Music- listening to songs and using instruments

Simon says

Instructions- board games

'Grandma went shopping....'

'Who am I?'



LISTENING BOTTLES

Match the
sounds.
Can you
find 2
sound the same?

SHAKE THE BOTTLES AND
FIND 2 SOUNDS THE SAME.
WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?

A simple listening and matching game that the children can help to make.

What would you rather find?

A magic sweet bag that is always full

A magic book that talks to you

A magic carpet that can take you anywhere

Because

.....

Discussion prompts and conundrums are really great for children of 3 or over to begin to use language to debate, reason and give their own thoughts and ideas



What job
would you like
to do?

A king or queen
A clown
A police person

Because

.....

What would you
rather be chased
by?

An angry wasp
A grumpy fairy
A tickle monster

Because

.....

Would you rather...

Be 3 feet tall or 8 feet tall?

Be a deep sea diver or an astronaut?

Have a pet that was a giant hamster or a tiny rhino?

Be able to stop time or fly?

Be born with an elephant trunk or a giraffe neck?

Have a missing finger or have an extra toe?

Have a very strict teacher and learn a lot, or have a very easy teacher and not learn much?

Be able to control the weather or be able to talk to animals?

Have bright blue teeth, or bright blue hair?

Only be able to whisper or only be able to shout?

Only eat your favorite food for the rest of your life, or never eat it again?

Be hairy all over or completely bald?

Live without music or live without TV?

Have a big group of friends or one very close friend?

Be invisible or be able to read minds?

Find out your parents are secretly spies or aliens?

Live in a world where people suddenly break into song or break into kung fu fights?

Be the worst player on the best team or the best player on a great team?

Get stung by a bee or get a sunburn?

Go to the pool or go to the beach?

Have your body turn green when you get wet, or have your hair turn purple when you are in the sun?

Be a pencil or a rubber band?

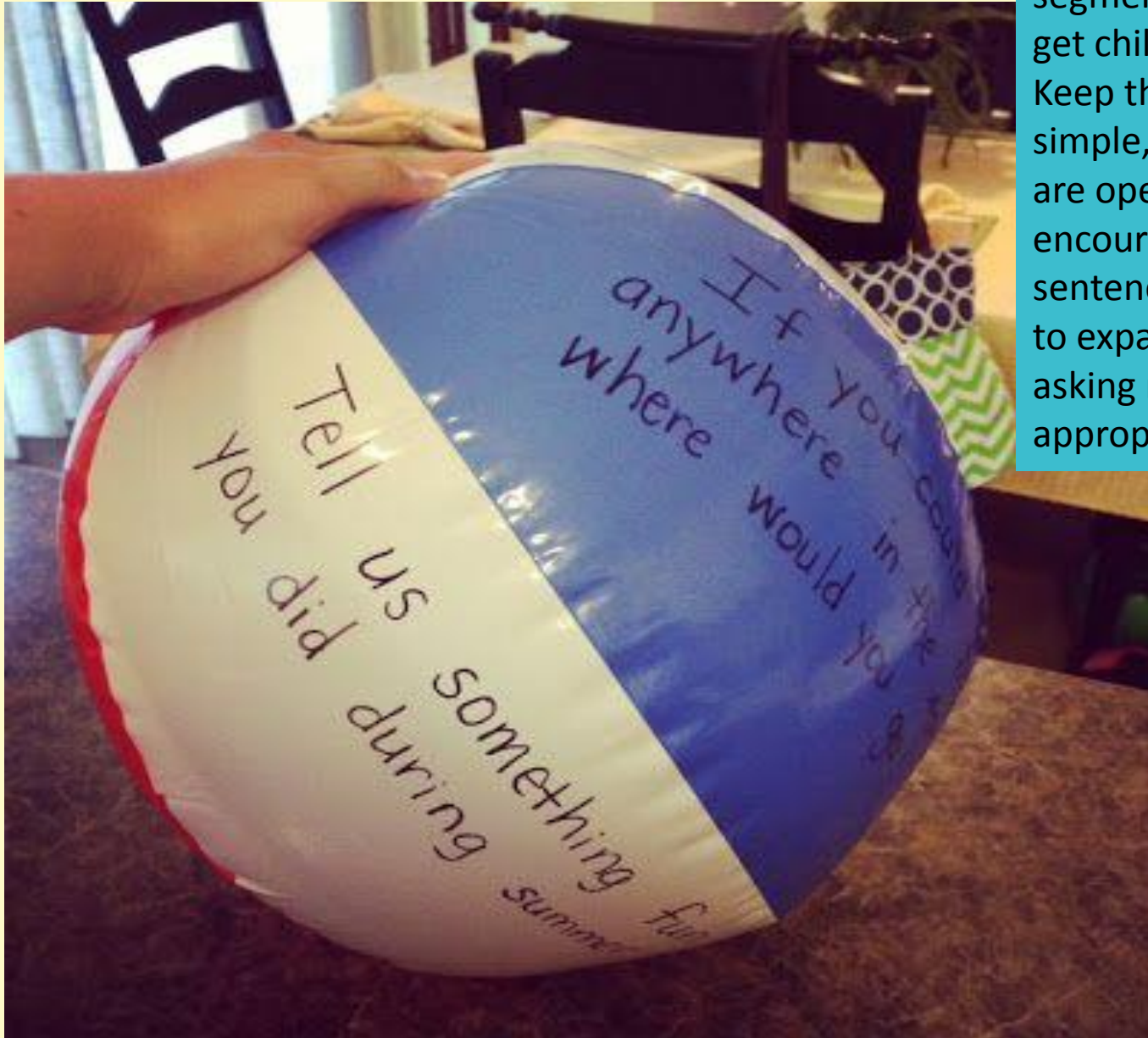
Have someone give you \$100 or give \$1,000 to the charity of your choice?

Jump into a pool of marshmallows or a pool of jello?

Have a head the size of an orange or a watermelon?



www.carsondellosa.com



A simple roll of a ball with segmented questions can get children talking. Keep the questions and simple, but make sure they are open ended to encourage children to talk in sentences. Encourage them to expand their answers by asking more questions if appropriate.

what's in the
storytelling tin?



NurtureStore



Have talk props that will interest and motivate children to talk to each other or to you

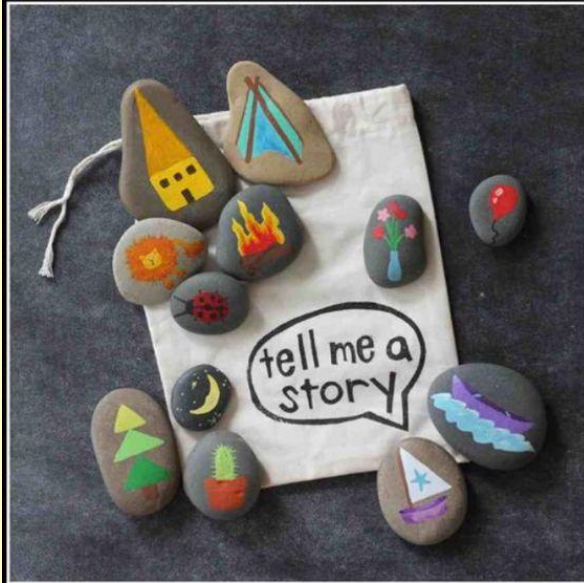


By providing props for children's favourite stories you can encourage children to act out the story, retelling it and using the language of books, all required to achieve the desired outcomes in Literacy



We're Going on a *Bear Hunt*
Michael Rosen
Helen Oxenbury

Providing a simple song/rhyme bag or basket will encourage children to sing, which in turn aids their language acquisition and helps them to learn about and explore rhythm and rhyme, both important skills on the journey to being literate.



Pull stones out at random & use them to create a story.
Easy to make & great for improving communication.

Simple painted stones help children to not only sequence a story but to make up their own and then they can tell it to you.

Old MacDonald Had a Farm Music Basket



www.playlearneveryday.com

Who lives here?

Opening the door
on a new story

Providing simple stimuli that will ignite children's curiosity and spark their imagination is a sure fire way to get them talking



Similar to puppets – soft toys can be talk buddies for children. A simple idea is to let each child ‘adopt’ a pet. They then become their pet’s special friend and need to look after them. You can support them in talking about what they need to do.



I spy with my little eye...



We're Going on a Word Hunt



Plan and provide some simple word games to play with the children to get them talking. For younger children a simple eye spy game is easier if you limit the choices and they can even describe the item to increase the talk. For example, "I spy with my little eye, something that is green and hangs on a tree."





To teach children to understand positional language and prepositions, play a simple place the ladybird game. For example you put the ladybird on top of the bowl and the child tells you, using words, where it is



Simple treasure hunts always get children chatting about what they are looking for and where they might find it

preschool discovery baskets

NurtureStore



Simple collections of objects that will interest your children will spark questions, comments and talk.

Try to put together collections that are based around the current fascinations that your children show in their play.

Collections also helps children to learn about collective nouns. For example they may know the word 'brush', but do they know all of the different types of brushes there are?





Sorting and grouping activities always spark talking. What belongs with what? What do you like best and why? Which is the biggest/smallest etc? This type of talking helps children to learn to clarify their thoughts.



Sort Lights and Darks

It can be useful to add something to your collections that doesn't belong there, for example with the clothes for washing, pop in a watch. Then you ask questions such as, "How do you think that got there?" "How can we find out who it belongs to?" "What should we do with it?" etc



These type of sorting activities encourage children to use classification vocabulary such as “same as, different, pattern, stripes, match” etc which aid vocabulary building.



By going on searches for given objects you can support children in building their descriptive language. This example would help children to learn about shades of brown and how to describe them:

Light brown

Dark brown

Chestnut

Beige

Chocolate brown etc





Investigative play supports children in using talk to explain, organise and reflect if the adult asks simple questions such as:

What have you found out?

What is happening?

What will happen when you.....?

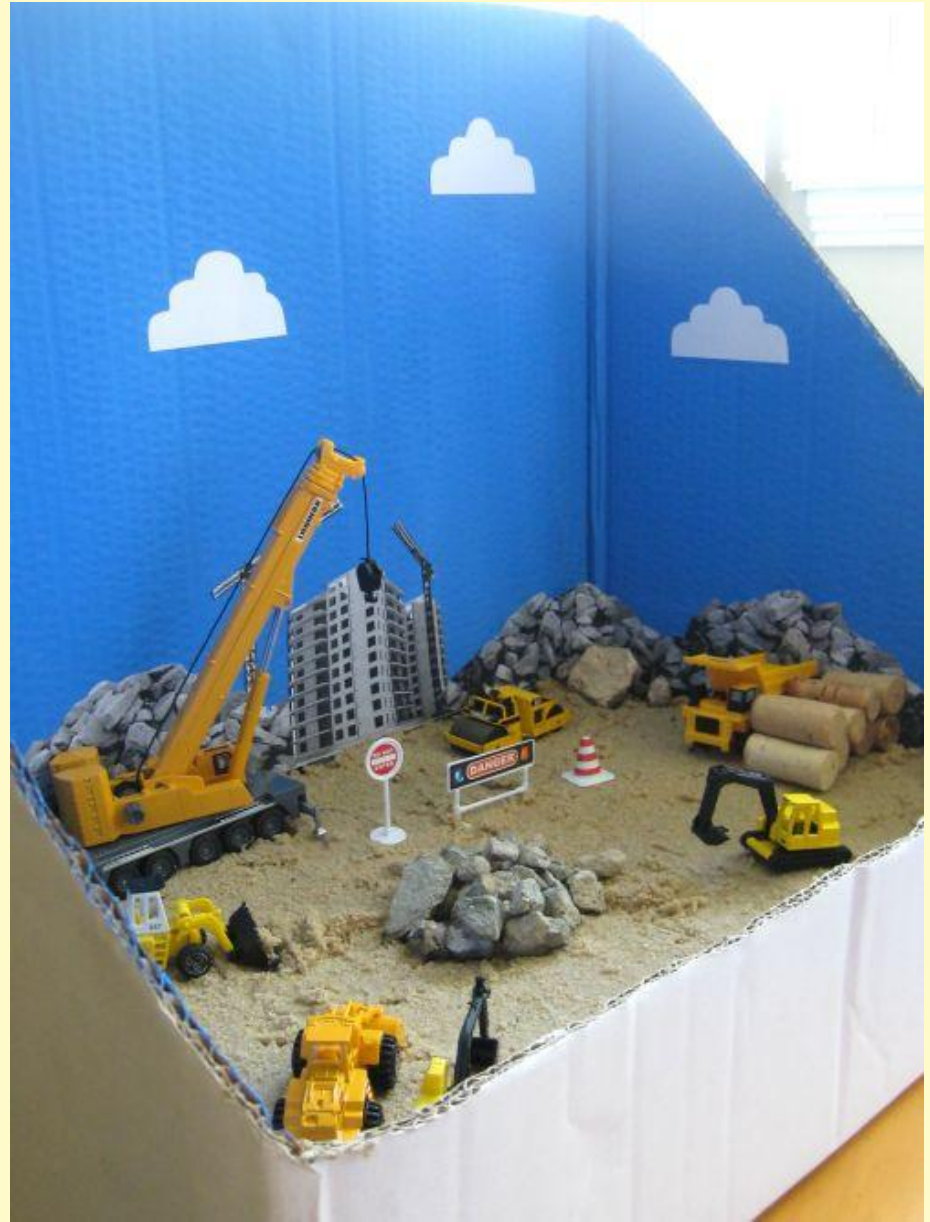
Tell me what you are finding out?



Allowing children to explore and find things out for themselves provides them with the opportunity to tell you all about what they have discovered



Imaginative play – be it role play or small world play provides opportunities for children to act out their thoughts through actions and words and to build up their use of imaginative language





Try to provide different types of role play to encourage children to adopt different roles, explore the language that different people might use, and to build up their vocabulary





It is useful to develop simple prop boxes for different types of imaginative play that can be brought out at different times, dependent on their interests. Some ideas are:

- Doctors
- Birthday parties
- Dinosaur world
- Fairy land
- Picnic basket





Providing simple challenges or discovery prompts will help children to not only experiment and test out their ideas, they provide an excellent opportunity to support them in linking ideas through words and explaining their findings



Experimentation activities enable children to learn to use talk to predict, to justify and to explain





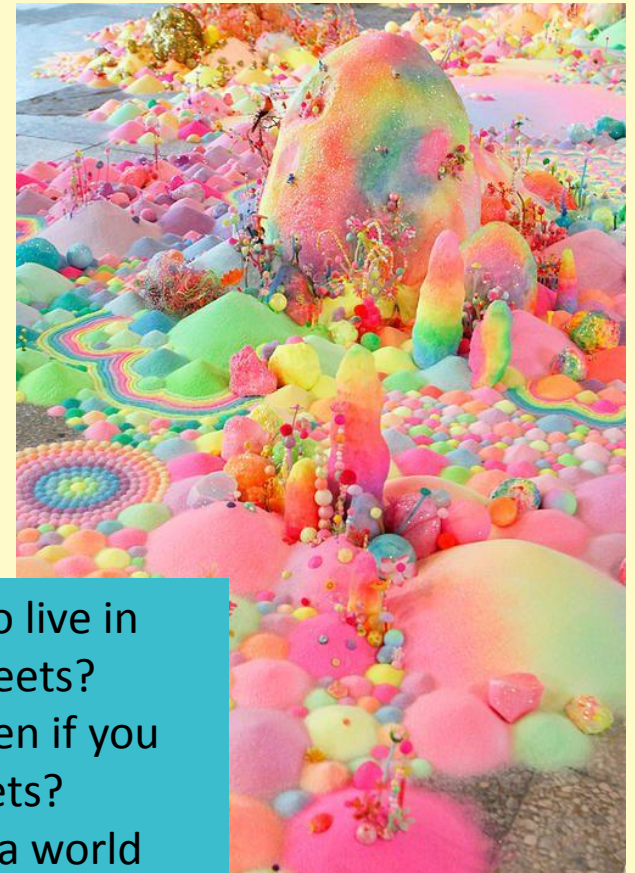
Sitting quietly with a child and discussing their thoughts on a picture is a great way of supporting their language development.

What do you think a Super Squirrel would be able to do?

Where do you think he would live?

What would other animals think of him?

If you had special powers what would you want to be able to do?



Would you want to live in world made of sweets?
What would happen if you only ever ate sweets?
Who might live in a world like this?



- What is this squirrel doing?
- Have you ever seen a squirrel like this?
- Where do you think this might be?
- Do you know any tricks?
- Why do think he is wearing a hat?
- What do think he might have underneath the walnut shells?
- He looks happy, why do think that is?
- What makes you happy?

- Oh my goodness – what has happened here?
- How do you think this happened?
- How will he get down?
- Do you think he is liking this?
- Would you like to be like this?
- Where do you think this is?

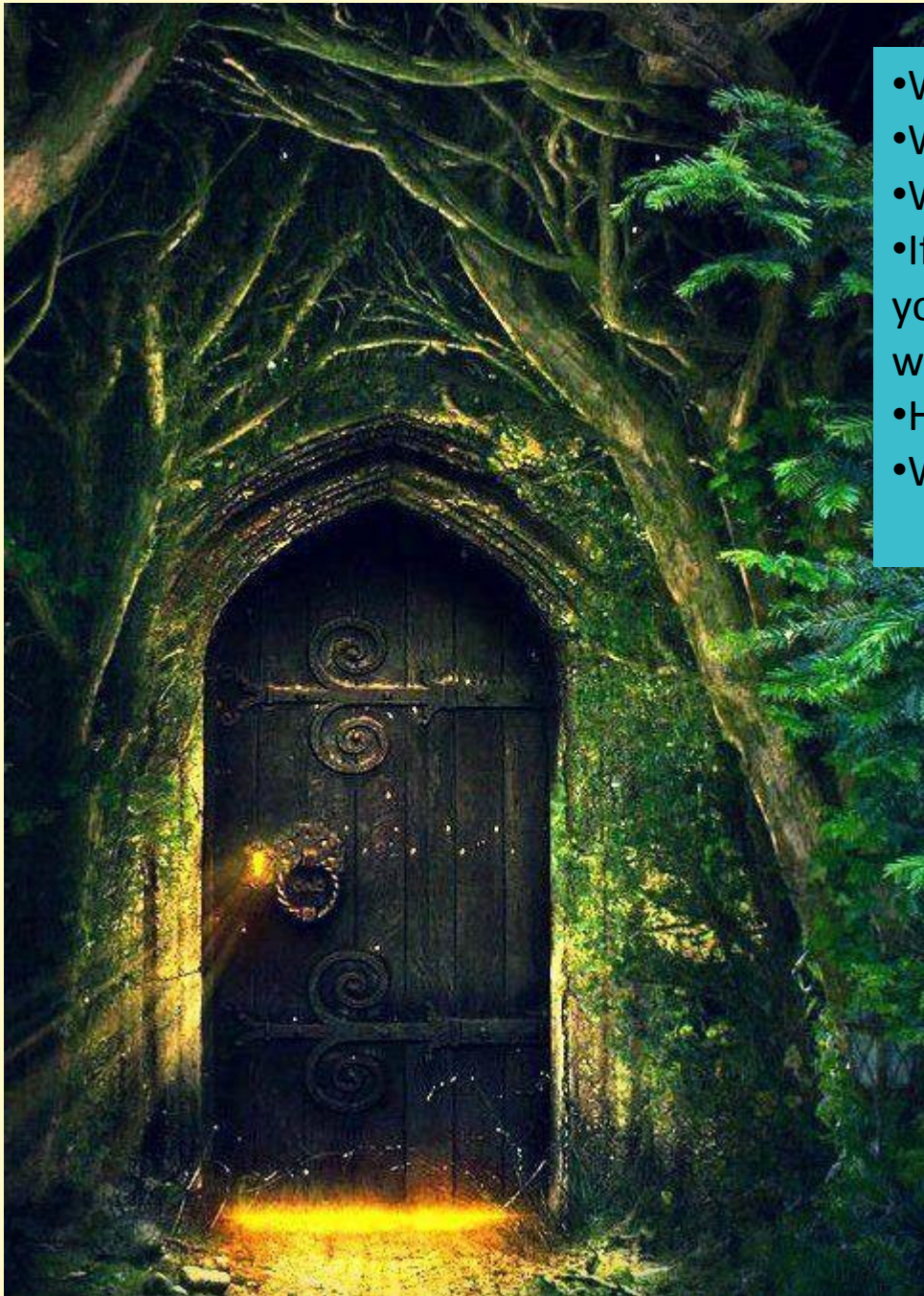




- Do you think this is real?
- Why is that?
- What would you do if you had a pet dragon?
- Why is there smoke coming from his mouth?
- Do you think he is friendly? What makes you think that?



- What would you do if you saw this tree?
- Would you ask it any questions? If you would, what would you ask? If you wouldn't, why not?
- Where do you think this could be?
- He looks quite happy. Why do you think that is?
- If you climbed up this tree what do you think would happen?
- What would be at the top?



- What do you think is behind the door?
- Where do you think you would be?
- Where do you think this is?
- If you went through the door, would you take someone with you? Who would you take and why?
- How does this picture make you feel?
- Why is that?

Use the children's responses to generate more questions. And always offer your own ideas and thoughts, so that the children can learn from you as well

Creating play scenarios and problems to enhance talk



Fairies at the bottom of the garden:
Place some simple button mushrooms in a circle and sprinkle some glitter around them:

- Who has made this ring?
- Where do you think they are?
- Where do you think they live?
- What do you think they look like?
- What can we do for them?



The Giant's Shoe:

Place a large walking boot, somewhere in the garden that the children will find:

- Who does it belong to?
- Where has he gone?
- What will he do without his shoe?
- How can we get it back to him?

Other ideas:

Find a lost bag and discuss who's it could be and how you could get it back to them.

Make a large papier mache egg: The aliens have landed!

Put a small mouse hole on your skirting board and have a mouse friend who leaves questions for the children.

Opportunities for speaking and listening

- Tongue twisters
- Feely bags
- Silly sentences
- Listening games – squeak piggy squeak
- Digging for treasure
- Chinese whispers
- Stories to act out
- Visits and outings

Everything you do is an opportunity for modelling talk with children and expanding their vocabulary and confidence in communicating



Resources checklist to support Speaking and Listening

- Puppets
- Telephones and mobiles
- Tape recorders and tapes
- Dressing up
- Role play resources and Small World figures
- Mirrors
- Musical instruments
- Treasure baskets
- Collections
- Chatterboxes
- Story sacks
- Sounds lotto
- Voice changers/microphones

