

Communication and Language



The following areas of the Early Years curriculum are PRIME areas and are therefore fundamental aspects of the teaching and learning provision in Reception. The Early Learning goal statements are considered to be what most pupils can achieve by the end of their first year of school and although we know that children progress at different rates, for most pupils, these are achievable through a breadth of experiences both at school and at home.

Speaking Early Learning Goal

Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

Understanding Early Learning Goal

Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

Listening and attention Early Learning Goal

Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

It goes without saying that everything we do in Reception builds on these three areas of the curriculum because without them, children will struggle to interact with others, express themselves and will find it difficult to access learning around them. We explicitly teach children skills within each area of speaking, understanding, listening and attention and as role models, we show the children how this enables us to develop good communication skills.

Michael Rosen, Children's Laureate – (The National Strategies, Every Child a Talker)

It may seem an obvious thing to say, but one of the best things we can do with young children is to have interesting and enjoyable conversations with them. What this means is that as we go about our activities, whether at home or at nursery, playgroups, playgrounds, the childminding situation, or out and about, we should make a special effort to answer children's questions, point out things that interest us, involve children in helping and planning what to do next – whether that's putting out things to play, tidying up, where to visit or whatever.

When reading a book with children, make a special effort to read slowly, with lots of fun and expression. Don't worry about stopping if the children ask you questions. Encourage them to join in with the sounds and rhythms of the story. We should also think carefully about how we speak to children – do we spend too much of the day issuing commands: 'do this', 'do that'? Do we ever say things that make children seem small by telling them that they're slow or not good enough?

We all need to think how we can keep being positive, encouraging them as they try to say things. And we can find ways of showing them how the things they say can end up as writing, by writing what they say and displaying it. When we do this, this has to include everyone. No one can be missed out. All this is crucial for how young children develop their powers of thinking and understanding. At the same time, it's how they get to feel good about themselves. The two things are intertwined – feeling good about yourself, feeling confident enough to develop your thinking and understanding. I wholeheartedly support Every Child a Talker, and I 'm sure it'll help all of us working with young children to focus on what will help every single child develop.

For further support, head to **The Communication Trust** website

<http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/early-years/> as this will signpost you to Speech, Language and Communication advice for children in the Early Years. You can find out what to expect at each stage of your child's development and offer practical advice on the importance of developing listening skills. Most importantly, it will give you advice on promoting talk at home with practical tips on how to encourage your child to develop communication skills in preparation for school.



In addition to this, head to the Literacy Trust for more practical advice on developing speaking and listening skills in the Early Years <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk>

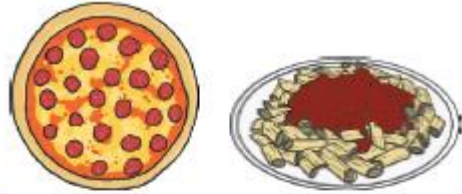
For some fun conversation starters to use at home, please see the following two pages.

Conversation starters to use at home

Do you prefer Spiderman or Superman? Why?



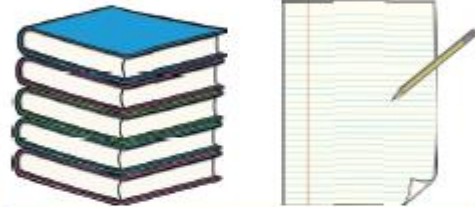
Do you prefer pasta or pizza? Why?



Would you rather eat onions or worms? Why?



Would you rather read a book or do your homework? Why?



Do you prefer ice cream or chocolate cake? Why?



If you could fly, what would you do? Why?



If you had a superpower, what would it be? Why?



Would you rather have super strength or be able to fly? Why?



Do you prefer jelly or snails?
Why?



Would you rather eat mussels or squid?
Why?



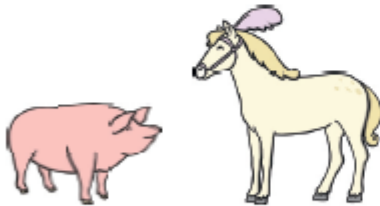
Would you rather walk or swim?
Why?



Would you rather drink a milkshake or a fizzy drink?
Why?



Do you prefer pigs or horses?
Why?



Would you rather live underwater or live in outer space?
Why?



If you could turn invisible what would you do?
Why?



Would you rather ride a bike or take the bus?
Why?

