

54 Ideas for Parents to Get Worcestershire Talking!

Speech, language and communication skills are important for all children, not just those with identified needs. These fun activities will engage families, heightening their awareness of speaking and listening and in turn develop language skills that are so important to literacy and learning.

The following list is designed for settings or schools to use in newsletters or on their website. The ideas can be used as a pick and mix, and used flexibly as you wish to.

Suggestion for an introduction to newsletters or websites:

- Here is a list of fun ideas to develop your child's language and communication skills as well as helpful tips and advice.
- The ideas don't cost anything and can be played anywhere when you have a few moments, such as when you are walking down the street, in the car, on the bus or in a doctor's waiting room. By developing your child's speaking and listening you will be supporting their reading, writing and learning.
- If your child speaks more than one language do these activities in your home language as a strong home language provides a foundation from which other languages can grow. So get talking!

Ideas

1. **Learning words.** As adults we need to know about 30,000 words. Most of these words are learnt in childhood. Children are programmed to learn words; they just need to hear them. Reading to your child is one way to expose your child to more words. If you come across an interesting word in a book try and use it again in a conversation with your child.
2. **Listening skills.** For children to develop listening skills they need to practice them. In busy family lives there is often little quiet time. Try and reduce distracting noise. If no one is watching the TV, turn it off. There's enough volume in most homes without music on as well. Do a little every day to develop listening skills. One simple idea to get you started is: when you lose your mobile phone in the house, call it from the landline and ask the kids to find it.
3. **Cooking.** Do some cooking with your child. It involves co-operation, planning, reading and listening. All things you need to succeed in school. As well as being great skills for life.
<http://www.cookuk.co.uk/children-index.htm>
4. **Outdoor listening game.** This listening game that works best outdoors. Stand still and ask everyone to close their eyes. Listen to the sounds that you hear. One player names a sound that they can hear. Everyone points to the sound. Then on the count of 3 everyone opens their eyes. Are you all pointing in the same direction?
5. **Explaining.** Listen to your child explaining how they do a favourite activity. Explaining how to do something is good practice for the type of speaking that your child needs to do in school. Ask your child to talk about how they made a Lego model, how they play a computer game or a board or card game. Try and listen without asking too many questions.



6. **Stop the DVD.** Before you play a DVD tell all the viewers that you will be stopping it at some point. Choose a really exciting time to stop it. Ask everyone to guess what they think will happen next. Why do they think that?
7. **Explore your local library.** As well as books they will have tapes and events to develop speaking and listening. Your nearest library is at ... (school to complete)
8. **'I spy'.** 'I spy' is a familiar game, but it is great for learning language and phonics as well as filling in time on journeys. On the bus or in the car one player looks around and thinks of one item. He /she then gives a clue 'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with (and says letter)'. All other players guess the item. Give 'I spy' a twist by giving a clue as well as the traditional letter. Like this, 'I spy with my little eye a food that starts with an 's'.'
9. **Favourite movie.** Ask your child to retell a favourite movie. If this is too long, start on something simpler like a favourite story book. Does it have a beginning, middle and end? Can you follow what they are talking about? You can prompt by drawing pictures of the main characters and using these to act out some scenes.
10. **Advice.** Talking is important. It is closely linked to reading, writing and learning. Did you know that research shows that spoken language abilities at 5 years of age predict their reading at 15? By playing simple speaking and listening games you may not think you are developing reading and writing, but you are. Get talking!
11. **One for the bus or car.** Start with calling out 'a'. Everyone then tries to spot something that starts with an 'a.' when someone has called out an item starting with 'a' you can move on to 'b' and so on through the alphabet.
12. **Chinese Whisper.** If you've got lots of friends or family over play 'Chinese Whisper.' One player thinks of a sentence. He /she whispers it to another person once. This second person then whispers the message to the next person and so on down the line. The last person says the sentence out loud. Does it match what the first speaker said? Probably not! Emphasise to children that you need to listen to get the best result.
13. **Developing home language.** Most libraries have books and audio tapes or DVD's in several languages. Read stories to your child in your home language, listen to music in your home language. The more your child hears the language the more likely they are to use it. Don't be afraid to use your home language indoors and outdoors! When children hear their home language being used naturally they are more likely to use it themselves and feel confident in using it.
14. **If I was King for a day.** Ask your child 'if you were King / Queen for a day what would you do?' Give them some time to think of an answer and then ask them why they chose that one. Encourage your child to ask other people what they would do if they were King / Queen for a day. A variation for older children is Prime minister instead of King / Queen.
15. **Listen for the punch line.** At the start of TV programme each person chooses a punch line or word to listen out for. When each person hears their word they shout out. You can tally them up and be as competitive as you wish.
16. **Team topic.** On the bus or in the car think of a topic and see how many things you can come up with as a team in a set time. A minute might be enough. You can choose any topic but here are some ideas for inspiration: 'living things, things with wheels, things with circles or things made of metal.'



17. **What's the same and what's different?** Choose a topic that your child is interested in and ask them select two items from that topic. Can they say what is same and different about two things? For instance: from Toy Story they could compare Buzz Light-Year and Woody or from Harry Potter it could be Sirius and Voldemort.
18. **Listening advice.** Concentrating on one thing at a time helps your child to learn to listen better. Too much competing noise makes it harder for your child to listen to anything. If your child is on the computer do they also need the TV on? Encourage your child to plan what they watch on TV.
19. **Change the story.** Take turns to tell well known stories with your child, but make small changes to the story and see where that takes you. Change the character, the setting or the ending. You might have 'Big red riding hood' or 'Goldilocks and the three kittens.' What would big red riding hood do to the wolf? What would Daddy kitten do when he saw Goldilocks in his bed? What would his voice sound like?
20. **Noisy treasure hunt.** This is good for practising listening. In another room hide something that makes a noise such as an old clock that makes a ticking noise. Ask your child to find the object. An alternative is to set a quiet ring tone on your mobile, hide it and then call it from another phone.
21. **Make something with your child.** It may be craft or construction. Doing it together gives lots of time for talking. Try and listen more than talk and comment more than question. This website will give you further ideas, but you can do great things with bricks or by cutting up old cereal packets.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/familytime/learning/>
22. **Linking up with school.** Talk to your teacher to find out what topics are being taught in class. Ask him / her about any practical activities that are useful to support your child's learning. Supporting learning at home will really help your child to learn more about words they are learning in school. It might be as simple as a walk to the park looking for living things or a talking about what it was like when you were a child. Your child's teacher will have lots of ideas.
23. **English/home language.** This game is great for helping children acquire good vocabulary in all the languages that they speak. Choose a theme e.g. clothes/fruit/vegetables etc. Start by naming an item from the category in your home language. Your child must then say that word in English. It's now their turn to say a new word from the same category in the home language and you must name it in English. See how fast you can go! When your child doesn't know a word, be sure to explain what it is and try to use that word more so they can learn it.
24. **Build a story.** One person starts a made up story with one sentence, such 'as once upon a time an enormous giant was sleeping when.....' Other players then take turns to build on the story one sentence at a time. This is great to play in a group but is also fun when there are just two of you. Get creative and see what twists and turns you can add to your story.
25. **Advice.** This one is for adults only! Listen to yourself when you talk to your child. Who does most of the talking? Who does the listening? Who asks the questions? Children's language develops more when adults follow the child's interests, use comments instead of questions and really show they are listening Set yourself a little target such as: giving your child more time to answer, comment more and question less, talk about things that interest your child. It's not as easy as it sounds so go easy on yourself.
26. **Alphabet lists.** Choose a category, it might be something like clothes, food or TV programmes. Then choose a letter. See how many words you can think of from that category that start with the target letter. E.g.: clothes starting with 's': scarf, socks, sweatshirt.



27. **What does it do?** This is another game for journeys: one player calls out an object that they see and the next person has to think of 5 things that it can do / be done with it. For instance: 'tree' climb, chop, grow, fall down, and absorb carbon dioxide. If you are stuck in doors you can look around you or in books and play the same activity.
28. **Big brain.** 'Big brain' is a variation on 'I spy' but rather than seeing something you need to think of an object and the letter it starts with. Great for playing when you are waiting somewhere. For instance: 'I think with my big brain something that is cold starts with an 'I''. 'Is it ice?' 'No.' Can you guess what it is?
29. **Do some acting.** Take in turns to act out some simple scenarios like getting a pretend present, falling over and hurting your knee, running late for work / school or finding that your bike is missing. Really emphasise body language, facial expressions as well as what to say. Lots of phones have video recording, so it is fun to play them back as well.
30. **Get out and about.** Exploring London will give you and your child lots to talk about as well as lots of time to play the speaking and listening games on the journey. Take photos of your trip so that your child can talk to others when you get back. If no one is home when you get back, give someone else a call so your child can talk to them.
31. **Reading and talking.** Reading books to your child is a great way to develop your child's language. Books expose children to more complex language. For children who are learning to read hearing stories can make them more enjoyable. For able readers talk about what you have read together to further develop their understanding.
32. **Information for parents.** Check out this website: www.talkingpoint.org.uk it has lots of information for parents about speaking and listening.
33. **Get your child involved in planning parties or holidays.** This involves lots of talking, thinking and planning. Who will be coming? What will you need to do? What food will you need? What can you do before? Who needs to do what? And maybe even how can we cut costs?
34. **Listening walk.** When walking down the street stop talking for a moment. Spend a short time listening. When you have stopped listening talk about what you heard. What was making all those noises? If one person heard a noise that others didn't then spend a few more seconds listening. Can you hear it now?
35. **Write down on pieces of paper a range of words.** They might be related to what your child is learning in school or any words that they are familiar with. Place all the words in a 'hat'. Each person takes a turn at taking out words from the hat. The challenge is to describe the word without using it at all. For instance: for 'Africa' you can say it is a continent, it is much hotter than UK and you would find the river Nile there. Remember you can't say 'Africa' in the clue though.
36. **Things you touch, see smell, taste and hear.** Talk about sensory experiences as they arise. When you smell something (good or bad) talk about words to describe it. Touch things. Can your child think of a word that describes how it feels. If they use words like 'good' or 'nice' challenge them to think of a more precise word, such as 'rough' or 'soothing'.
37. **Advice if you are concerned.** If you are concerned about your child's speech, language and communication development speak to your child's class teacher or SENCO or contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service.



38. **Developing talking develops writing.** Encourage your child to make up spoken stories. To help their ideas give your child a start such as, 'I walked into a haunted house and ...', 'I was walking down the street one day when I found a puppy, so I decided to ...' or 'at school this morning our head teacher was acting really strange...' only get involved if they need a little help to keep going.
39. **Asking Why?** Children like to ask 'Why?' so try asking some back. Start off with some obvious ones (usually related to 'rules') such as 'why do we need to look both ways before we cross the road?', before making it harder with more abstract ones like 'Why do our bodies like us to eat breakfast?' to ones that require real reasoning such as 'which is better to have holidays in summer or winter? Why?'
40. **Bilingual children.** Research shows that bilinguals are more able to use language in sophisticated ways than monolinguals. Don't be afraid to speak your home language with your child. Your child will acquire English at school but only you can teach your child your home language. Look at this website for more details about raising bilingual children. <http://www.bilingualism.co.uk/>. If English is the only language used at home think about how your child could learn another language. Children will learn another language faster than adults.
41. **Charades.** Have fun acting out and guessing famous characters, films or books that your child is familiar with. Make sure you start with people, characters or topics your child is very familiar with.
42. **What would you do?** Think up small problems that your child might encounter such as getting lost, losing money, finding a mobile phone etc. Ask your child what would they do? Why? Ask other people what would they do and why? Which one is the best? Why? All of this is good practice with reasoning skills which are really important for lessons such as science as well as learning social skills.
43. **Word associations.** One player starts by saying a word. The next player says a word that is related to the first word. It can be related in any way. If another player cannot see how the words are related they can challenge and the connection needs to be explained. Keep going until a word is repeated or a connection cannot be explained. Here's an example: Egypt – Mummy – Dad – beard – Santa Claus – Christmas – trees – leaves
44. **Get Worcestershire Talking campaign:** follow Worcestershire's Speech and Language Therapy Service on Facebook or on Twitter @SLT_Worcs for weekly tips, advice and resources to encourage language and communication development.
45. **Sing together.** Learn the words to a song together. For younger ones it can be nursery rhymes, but pop songs can also work well. Learning songs involves listening, taking turns as well as singing.
46. **Read a play.** Read a book or play together that has lots of direct speech in it. If you don't have a book like this at home your school or local library will have plays appropriate for children that are really good for this. Have fun making different voices, and act it out as well.
47. **In the corner shop.** This one is simple. In the corner shop let your child do the talking. They might need a little coaching at first, but with practice they can develop confidence with talking and with handling money.
48. **20 questions.** One person thinks of an object. Others try and guess what it is by asking questions. The original player can only answer yes, no or maybe. Give a clue if they are on the wrong track. Can they guess it in 20 questions?
49. **Giving directions.** Ask your child to give someone directions on how to get somewhere. They have to know words like 'left, right and straight ahead' first. Start with your child telling Granny how they get to school, but as they get better at it ask them to direct someone to less familiar places.



50. **Tell a story from your childhood.** Traditional stories are important for developing language but also culture. If you feel creative you can of course use props such as puppets or draw faces on your fingers to improvise.
51. **Bilingual I Spy.** This one is a variation of the traditional “I Spy” but is great for beginner bilingual learners. Take turns to name items in and around your surrounding (must be in sight) in your home language. Say “I spy” and then use your home language term for something e.g. "I spy la puerta," to which your child must point to the “door”. Take turns with your child so that they also get a chance to name items in the home language. Presents. When thinking of presents for your child think about how they stimulate talking. Board games or card games or creative play often involve lots of speaking and listening skills. Better than anything you can buy is the precious commodity of time with interested adults, like you. On your child’s birthday give them someone to one time with you.
52. **Talking on the phone.** Give your child opportunities to talk on the phone. If they require some support, teach them how to answer the phone and prompt them with what they can say on the phone. Granny in particular will be grateful!
53. **I went shopping.** This game is sometimes called ‘I went shopping’ and is good for developing memory, so is good for adults too. One person starts by saying ‘I went shopping and I bought a ...’ (names a food item). The second player says ‘I went shopping and I bought ...’ and repeats the first player’s item before adding their own. The third player continues saying the first two items before adding their own. And so on. See how many you can remember.
54. **Word of the day.** Select a word for the day. Everyone tries to use it as much as possible. The sentences that the word is in must make sense and fit what you are talking about. They can’t be random nonsense. See who can use the word the most.

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