



SEND Support Services: Social Use of Language



Age Range: any age - adapt the advice and activities to reflect your child's language skills.

Who can use this: Parents/Teachers/TAs,

When to seek extra support:

- When your child is becoming distressed about their social communication difficulties.
- When these difficulties are impacting significantly upon their ability to communicate with adults or friends.

Who needs this?

Children who find it challenging to:

- Interact appropriately with others
- Use and interpret non verbal communication
- Understand their own and other people's emotions

What can you do?

Your child may find many areas of social communication challenging, here are some things you can do:

- Practise turn taking with younger children, perhaps using a 'my turn' symbol to show whose turn it is. Any game or activity can be used for this.
- Use roleplay, either with toys for younger children, or older siblings, to demonstrate how to interact appropriately. Your child may not know how to change the way they talk according to the situation (e.g. talking to grandma on the phone, compared to their best friend).
- Create situations where your child WANTS to communicate with you - talk about something that really interests them.
- Be aware of the language you use, you might need to explain some common terms, such as 'you're on a roll' or 'I'm feeling under the weather today'.
- Understanding emotions can be very tricky - your child may not know how to talk about more complex emotions, such as worried, scared, pleased, relieved. Talk about these feelings when they occur, making links between what is happening and how that makes you feel.

SEND SUPPORT SERVICES: Speech and Language Team

Aesca House, South View, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 0SF, Tel 01670 624802

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Activities to try:

These activities can help children who tend to dominate the conversation, or don't listen to what others are saying:

Following directions - Games such as Follow the Leader or Simon Says teach children to listen and follow rules. Children also need the opportunity to practise giving clear directions and it is important to reverse roles and allow the child to give the commands.



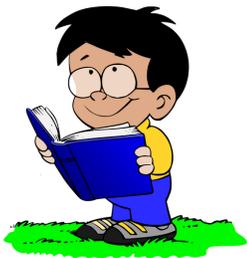
Buzz it - Make some topic cue cards (e.g. school, holiday, favourite animal, TV etc...) and place them in a bag. Take it in turns to pull out a cue card from the bag - the person then has to talk for 60 seconds about the topic they have selected (time can be reduced to thirty seconds initially). The aim is for the person to talk only about that topic. If they begin to talk about something else the partner can 'buzz' in.

What do I know about? - Using the cue cards from the 'Buzz it' activity, take it in turns to select one of the topic cue cards. As each person chooses a topic they have to tell their partner 3-5 things about that topic, for example, 'holidays' – 'I went to Italy on holiday this year', 'We stayed in a big hotel', 'I made a sandcastle on the beach'. Your child must stop after the agreed number of turns, then it is your turn.

All About Me - Make 'All About Me' charts that have boxes for name, age, birthday, favourite colour, food, family etc. . . and give a copy to each person. Once the charts are filled in, take it in turns to tell each other two things about another person e.g. 'X likes to play football but doesn't like playing hockey'. (This works better with more than two people).

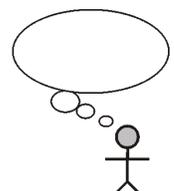


If your child struggles to think about things from another person's perspective, you could try:



Stories and Books - Stories are valuable tools for teaching social communication skills. A story can be used to encourage your child to evaluate a different perspective (which might be different to their own). They can be used to encourage the child to predict what might happen. Alternative scenarios (different endings to the story) or communication problems (such as the child that no-one talks to) and feelings of the characters can all be used to teach social language.

Comic strip conversations - this strategy uses stick figures and symbols to represent social interactions and conversations, exploring emotional content. They can show what was actually said in the conversation, how people might be feeling and what their intentions might be. They can be useful to reflect on a situation that has happened, providing an opportunity to think about different reactions.



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If your child struggles when people don't 'get' what they are trying to say, you could try:

Charades - This simple game provides opportunities for you to model how to provide information in different ways when another person doesn't guess correctly. You might need to clearly model how to do this, and help your child to rephrase what they are trying to say. It also teaches them how to signal that they have not understood and practise asking for clarification.



Remember - a child with social communication difficulties finds it genuinely challenging to understand and interpret the 'subtleties' of language that we, as adults, take for granted. Taking time to explain things they don't understand might be all that is needed.

Useful Links for more ideas and information

- www.afasic.org.uk
- www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/projects/talkingpoint
- A helpful guide to using comic strip conversations can be found here:
https://www.sendgateway.org/r/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations_1.html

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