

# Building Language at Home

Communication and Language  
Oracy in Early Year Foundation Stage



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## Key Vocabulary

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**Communication:** Sharing ideas, feelings, or information with others by talking, listening, or using actions.

**Language:** The words and sentences we use to talk to each other and understand what people say.

**Oracy:** Being able to talk and listen well in different places and with different people.

**Listening:** Paying attention to what someone else is saying with your ears and your mind.

**Speaking:** Using words and sentences to tell others what you think or feel.

**Conversation:** Talking with someone and taking turns to listen and speak.

**Vocabulary:** All the words you know and use when you talk or listen.

**Question:** Something you ask to find out more or to check what you know.

**Storytelling:** Sharing stories, real or made-up, using words and actions.

**Encouragement:** Giving kind words or praise to help someone feel good about trying or learning.



At the end of the reception year, early years children are assessed against the Early Learning Goals. These goals determine whether children have made the expected level of development in each area for learning and development. There are two aspects to the ELGs for Communication and Language, the first being Listening, Attention and Understanding, and the second aspect of Speaking.

The ELGs for each aspect are:

### **ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding**

Children at the expected level of development will do the following:

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.
- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding.
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

### **ELG: Speaking**

Children at the expected level of development will do the following:

- Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary.
- Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.
- Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.



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## Why Communication and Language Matter

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Communication and Language is one of the prime areas for learning and development as stated in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage is clear when stating just how crucial it is for early years children to develop effective Communication and Language skills:

*'The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development.'*

Additionally, the statutory framework for the EYFS explains that:

*'Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development.'*

Communication and language are important for learning, playing, and building strong relationships at home and school.

- Talking and listening help us share ideas and feelings
- Communication builds friendships and learning
- Asking about your child's day supports language



We need to talk, Oracy Education Commission (October 2024)

### 3-4 years

Children at 3 to 4 years will usually be actively learning language and asking many questions. Children develop skills at different rates, but by 4 years usually children will:

- Listen to longer stories and answer questions about a storybook they have just read.
- Understand and often use colour, number and time related words, for example, 'red' car, 'three' fingers and 'yesterday / tomorrow'.
- Be able to answer questions about 'why' something has happened.
- Use longer sentences and link sentences together.
- Describe events that have already happened e.g. 'we went park.'
- Enjoy make-believe play.
- Start to like simple jokes.
- Ask many questions using words like 'what' 'where' and 'why'.
- Still make mistakes with tense such as say 'runned' for 'ran' and 'swimmed' for 'swam'.
- Have difficulties with a small number of sounds – for example r, w, l, f, th, sh, ch and dz.
- Start to be able to plan games with others.

## 4-5 years

At this stage, they need to listen, understand more and share their ideas within the classroom. They will use their language skills to help them learn to read.

Children develop skills at different rates, but by 5 years usually children will:

- Understand spoken instructions without stopping what they are doing to look at the speaker.
- Choose their own friends and play mates.
- Take turns in much longer conversations.
- Understand more complicated language such as 'first', 'last', 'might', 'may be', 'above' and 'in between'.
- Understand words that describe sequences such as "first we are going to the shop, next we will play in the park".
- Use sentences that are well formed. However, they may still have some difficulties with grammar. For example, saying 'sheeps' instead of 'sheep' or 'goed' instead of 'went'.
- Think more about the meanings of words, such as describing the meaning of simple words or asking what a new word means.
- Use most sounds effectively. However, they may have some difficulties with more difficult words such as 'scribble' or 'elephant'.



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## Developing Emotional Literacy

### Building Language at Home

**Before young children learn to talk, they can express their emotions and feelings very effectively by screaming, laughing or crying.**

Experts have identified that at around two years old children start to use a simple emotional vocabulary, using words like happy and sad, and they will be able to point to pictures which show these emotions. As their language skills develop between the ages of three and four, children will be able to express more complex emotional ideas and feelings and by ages four to five they should be able to start using language 'to negotiate and resolve disputes with other children'. By this age they also recognise that other people may think and have feelings that are different from theirs. Research shows that complex emotional vocabulary develops dramatically during childhood, doubling in size every two years between the ages of four and eleven.

Significant Long term benefits of building emotional literacy:

**It improves wellbeing.** When children can identify emotions and understand what those emotions feel like and what the behaviour that links to that emotion looks like, it helps them understand what is happening in their own hearts and heads

**It improves social relationships.** The ability to identify and manage emotions gives children a good foundation for positive relationship building.



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## Developing Emotional Literacy Building Language at Home

**Early Recognition:** Children start to recognize basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. They need support to name and describe these emotions

**Self-Regulation:** As children become more self-aware, they learn to manage their emotions and take control of their reactions, such as taking deep breaths when angry.

**Empathy:** Children develop the ability to recognize and empathize with the emotions of others, which is crucial for building relationships and understanding social cues

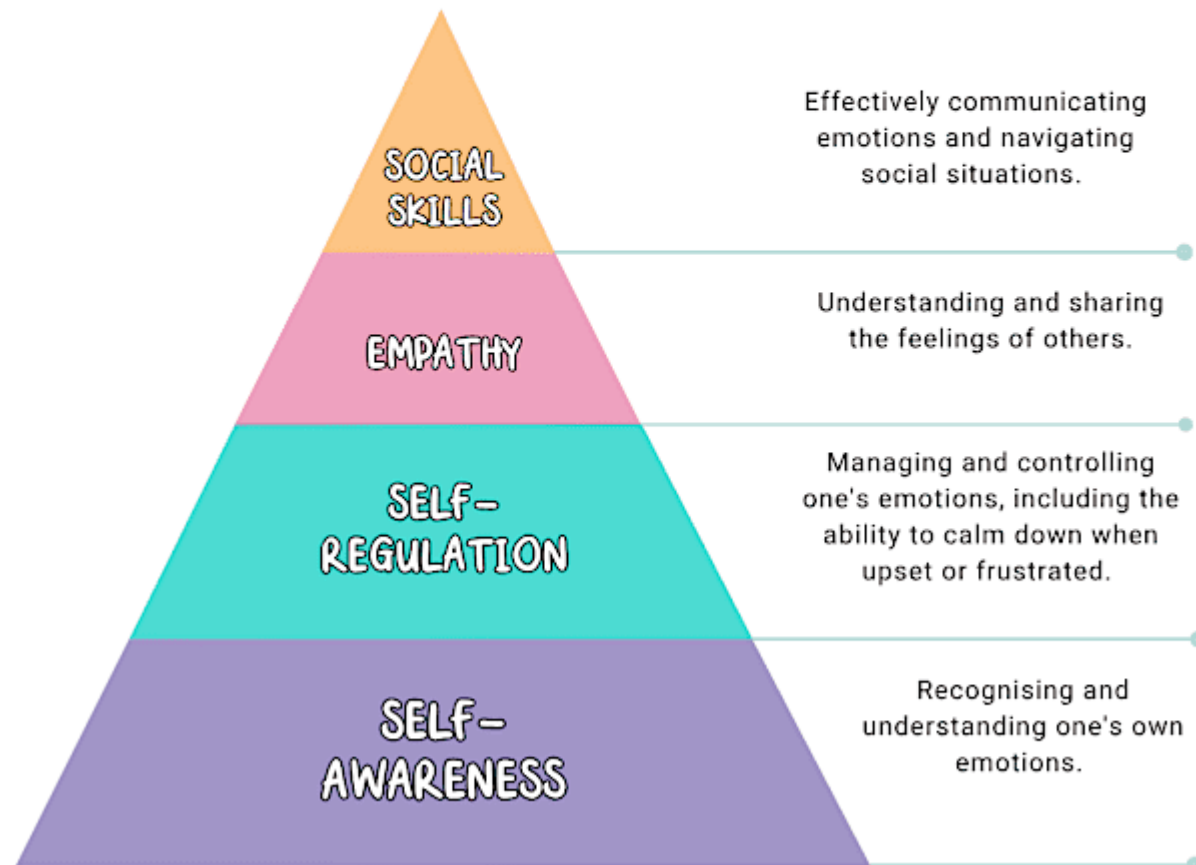
**Emotional Expression:** By the end of the EYFS, children should be able to express their feelings through words, actions, and play, demonstrating their understanding of emotions and their ability to communicate effectively.



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## Developing Emotional Literacy Building Language at Home

# PROGRESSION OF EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



<https://www.twinkl.ie/blog/ta-workshop-lets-talk-about-emotional-literacy-ta-cpd>



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## What Is Oracy?

### Building Language at Home

Oracy means being able to talk and listen well in different places and with different people. It is not just about speaking but also about listening carefully and understanding others.

When children practise Oracy, they learn how to share their ideas, ask questions, and join conversations.

For example, taking turns to talk at the dinner table helps children learn to listen and speak clearly.

Oracy is important for confidence and learning at school and beyond.

**Read aloud:** Read books together and discuss the themes and characters

**Word games:** Engage in games like 20 Questions or I Spy to use descriptive language

**Phone call:** Make phone calls to different family members to practice speaking

•**Nature walk:** Go on a nature walk to listen to sounds and describe them.



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## Parents and Carers Help Language Grow

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Parents and Carers play a big part in helping children learn to talk and listen. When you communicate with your child, answer their questions, or read together, you help them learn new words and understand more about the world. Even simple conversations, like talking about what you see on a walk, help your child's language grow.

**Children learn best when adults listen to them and encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings.**

### **How mouth comforts can affect your child's mouth and talking** **(Dummies, thumb sucking etc)**

Some children like to use a dummy or suck their thumb to feel comforted, especially when they are tired or upset. But when children keep using a dummy or sucking their thumb at age 4 or 5, it can change how their teeth grow and how their mouth works.

Sometimes, it makes it harder to say words clearly or listen carefully to others.

For example, if your teeth do not grow in the right way, it can be tricky to say sounds like "s" or "th."

Healthy mouths help us eat, talk, and smile with our friends.



## Talking, Listening, and Asking Questions

### Building Language at Home

When children talk, listen, and ask questions, they make sense of the world around them. Asking “why is the sky blue?” or “how does a car move?” helps children learn and think.

Listening to answers teaches them new things and shows how to join in conversations.

Encourage your child to ask questions and share their ideas, even if they are curious or unsure. This helps them become good thinkers and communicators.

Ask open-ended questions: Encourage your child to explain their thoughts and feelings.

For example:

“What was the best part of your day?”

“What do you think will happen next?”

“Tell me about your time at ...”

“Why did you choose that answer?”

“Can you show me what you mean?”

“Why did you choose to build it that way?”



## Reading, Singing, and Playing Together

### Building Language at Home

Reading stories, singing songs, and playing games are great ways to build your child's vocabulary and communication skills.

When you read together, talk about the pictures and ask your child what might happen next. Think about the questions you could ask your child to extend the story, for example "What would you have changed in the story?"

Singing nursery rhymes helps children remember new words and sounds. Children sing every day in school, what song have they learnt in school.

Playing pretend games lets children use their imagination and practise speaking. These fun activities make learning language enjoyable and help children express themselves.

When playing alongside children a good way to add new vocabulary is to narrate what you are doing. For example, if you are playing in a dolls house, you could say:  
"The boy is walking up the stairs, he is getting into bed, I think he is tired"



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## Responding to Children's Ideas

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It is important to listen to your child's ideas and encourage them to express themselves. When your child tells you a story or shares a thought, show interest and ask questions. This helps them feel valued and confident to speak.

For example, if your child says, "I saw a big dog," you might ask, "What colour was it?" or "Was it friendly?"

Responding to children's ideas helps them learn to explain and describe things.

- Listening shows children their ideas matter, give eye contact, nod along
- Validate their ideas- "That's an interesting idea!" "I can see you have been working hard on that thought"
- Responding builds confidence
- Can you extend their learning by asking open ended question: "What do you think would happen next?"
- Can you change a word they have used to add new vocabulary- If a child says "That animal is big" you could rephrase it and say " That bear is enormous and brown"
- Can you find books at home or in your local library to share together on a topic of interest.



**Children learn by watching and listening to adults.**

- When you speak clearly and listen carefully, your child learns how to do the same.
- Use simple sentences and repeat new words to help your child understand.
- Show good listening by looking at your child and nodding or smiling.

For example, if your child says, “I want juice,” you can reply, “You would like some juice. Let’s get it together.”

Modelling helps children learn how to communicate well.



## Creating Language-Rich Environments

### Building Language at Home

A language-rich environment is full of chances to talk, listen, and learn new words.

You can create this at home by having conversations, sharing stories, and exploring together.

Describe what you see, hear, and do with your child.

For example, talk about the colours of flowers in the garden or the sounds you hear on a walk.

These shared experiences help your child build vocabulary and learn to express themselves.

- Language-rich environments support learning
- Conversations and stories build vocabulary
- Shared experiences encourage speaking
- Daily Conversations
- Narration of daily activities- responding to childrens cutes to expand responses.
- Reading every day at home
- Playing games such as “I spy” or “Echo” to encourage language and description.



**Giving your child encouragement and praise helps them feel good about trying to talk and listen.**

- Celebrate their efforts, even if they make mistakes or use new words.
- Say things like, “Great job telling me about your drawing!” or “I love how you listened to the story.”

**Positive feedback makes children want to communicate more and builds their confidence.**

Remember, every child learns language at their own pace, and encouragement helps them grow.

### **Children's centres**

We have a few children's centres local to us who are able to offer a great deal of support to families. They run lots of sessions and groups for different aged children as well as parents. Please check out time website below—there is a timetable of events available on this page.

<https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/hubs/northlands-park-family-hub/>

### **NELFT - Speech and Language Therapy - Community children's team**

[Speech and language therapy - Essex children's integrated therapy - NELFT NHS Foundation Trust | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Email: [CSPA@nelft.nhs.uk](mailto:CSPA@nelft.nhs.uk)

Phone: [0300 300 1555](tel:03003001555)

Web: <https://www.nelft.nhs.uk/services-essex-childrens-speech-and-language-therapy>

### **Health Visitor**

Contact your health visitor if your child is under 5.

### **GP Practice**

Contact your GP practice for more help and guidance

### **School**

- Talk to your teacher about any concerns you may have

# Any Questions?

