

## Episode 5 - Dawn

# Speech and Language

Learning to communicate is a big journey for your little one. Here's how you can support their understanding of words and language.



### Serve and Return

Communication takes two – or more! When your child ‘serves’ you some communication (verbal or non-verbal), be sure to ‘return’ a response of your own. This shows your child how a conversation works. It also lets them know that you are listening, which will help give them the confidence to keep communicating in the future.

### Listen for sound swaps

Children can often make ‘sound swaps’ when they are learning new words, such as saying ‘tat’ instead of ‘cat’. Or perhaps they remove part of the word completely: ‘nana’ instead of ‘banana’.

This is perfectly normal. It is important to model the correct pronunciation back to your child. You can say, “Yes, it’s a banana,” which still rewards your child for correctly identifying an object.

Remember not to put any pressure on your child to repeat the word back to you. Simply model the correct pronunciation and continue the conversation. Sound swaps might happen more often with new words, but they usually go away with time, as your child becomes more familiar with a word.

### Narrate the situation

Children often need to hear a word several times before they use it themselves. Using a word when it is contextually relevant helps children to understand not only the sound of the word, but its meaning. Very young children aren’t as good as adults at talking about things can’t see, hear or feel in the moment. Talking through what you are doing, such as putting on your coats or going shopping, and naming various items, can develop this understanding.

### Extend the language

While you are playing with your child, think of other words you can use to describe what they are doing:

If you are playing with toy animals, describe the colour, size and shape of the animal along with its name. “That’s a penguin. What colour is the penguin? It is black, yellow and white. Is it a tall penguin or a squat penguin?”

This works especially well if your child has just said something themselves. If they say, “a yellow car,” you can say, “yes, a *tiny* yellow car”. Stress certain words for emphasis.