



# How to support children with Developmental Delay

## Language Development

### **How can I encourage my child (who has not begun to talk) to produce words or express themselves?**

- Verbal comprehension develops before verbal expression. Children should first understand what you say before they learn to speak. If children have not begun to talk, parents may teach them the correct names of common objects or guide them to follow common commands in daily life so as to improve their verbal comprehension first.
- Parents can guide their children to imitate some simple and funny sounds, such as phone ringtones, door bells, sounds of vehicles and animals, etc. If children start to imitate what the others say but still could not produce the correct articulation, parents should still praise them immediately in order to boost their motivation to express themselves.
- Parents can encourage children to use gestures to communicate. For example, children can pat themselves to mean “I”, use palm up to indicate “give me”, shake head to indicate “no”. When children express their needs by gestures, parents can help to describe them in words.
- Parents can also create opportunities for children to express their needs in order to motivate them to initiate interactions. For example, try not to give them utensils during meal time to see how they will express such needs.



## **What can I do if my child has unclear articulation?**

When children begin to talk, parents should give them encouragements and praises. Toddlers usually have unclear articulation and it takes some time for them to master all the sounds in their language. If the children speak unclearly, parents can model the correct articulation. However, parents must not force their children to repeat the exact articulation of all words because this will reduce the children's motivation to express themselves.

## **Can I teach my child how to talk by showing them TV cartoons and DVDs?**

Language development requires interactive processes of listening, imitation, correction and revision. By watching cartoons or DVDs, children receive one-way verbal input passively without any interaction. To facilitate children's language development, parents can spend more time playing interactive games with them such as playing cook-set toys, role-playing or reading books together. In this way, children can listen to what their parents say. Parents can also ask children questions and give elaborations so as to enhance their verbal comprehension and expression. If children are interested in cartoons or DVDs, parents can watch with them, elaborate and discuss on the contents while watching. Parents can also ask their children to describe the plot of the story. During the process of question and answer, children's language abilities can be enhanced.

## **My child is mainly taken care by domestic helper who seldom talks to him. Is it the reason why he has language delay?**

There are various reasons for language delay, such as global developmental delay, hearing impairment and autism, etc. In general, environmental factors are not the main cause of language delay. However, unfavourable language environment or lack of stimulation may aggravate the problem. Language is acquired through real-life scenarios and demonstrations. Parents can spend more time playing and talking to their children, rather than reliance on domestic helper to teach them how to speak. Parents who have long working hours may consider enrolment of their children to whole-day child care centres earlier so that they can have more opportunities to interact with their peers and have their language abilities enhanced through listening and imitation.



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