

# Speaking and Listening Activities

The following activities will help to improve children's speaking, listening, attention and understanding. There are also games that require children to work together which will help build relationships and teamwork with their peers. ☺

## EYFS

### Listening to Instructions

Give children instructions - stand up if you are wearing trainers / wearing something yellow / are a boy, etc. Allow a child to be the teacher and see if they can give out instructions from observations of what the children are wearing.

### Moving to Instruments

Move in different ways to different instruments - stamp to the drum, shake to the tambourine and clap to the castanet. (Start with 2 different instruments and increase as appropriate).

### Kim's game

Reveal a group of objects to children (could be animals, transport, everyday objects, food etc) using a feely bag and discuss them. Put them on a tray then cover them over with a blanket and remove one as you pull the blanket back off. Can children guess which one is missing? Make this harder by taking more away at a time.

### Follow a Pattern

Pass the pattern around the circle e.g. clap, stamp, clap. Adjust making it easier/harder as appropriate.

### Musical bumps

Explain the rules to the children and encourage them to listen carefully to the music. When the music stops, the children need to sit down, play it until you have a winner.

### Play 'Describe and Find'

Have random items in the middle of the circle, describe the item and see if the children can find it e.g. "they are shiny and are used to cut things". Each child to have a go. Use items such as animals, classroom objects, food, instruments, etc. Allow a child to be the teacher and have a go at describing.

### 'Go' game

Explain to the children that I am going to give them an instruction, but they can't carry it out until I've said GO. Shut your eyes - GO, Put one hand up - GO, etc. Every now and then don't say the word 'GO'. Once they have the hang of it, let the children have a go at saying their own instructions.

### Describe the Children

Adult to model it first, describing one of the children and asking the children to guess who I am describing e.g. "They have short brown hair and glasses". Take it in turns to describe someone in the group.

### The Compliment Game

This game can be done a number of different ways. Children can sit in a circle and throw a beanbag to each other, or they can just name the next person to get a turn. The point is for each child to get a chance to compliment another child in their class e.g. "*I like your long hair*" or "*You are really good at singing*". This teaches children how to pay compliments, and how nice it is to receive them. It also helps a group get to know each other and become closer.

### Sing the 'Pattern' Song

Adult to start with their own pattern and sing the song e.g. *clap your hands and tap your knees, clap your hands and tap your knees, clap your hands and tap your knees, now we've made a pattern!*"

Encourage all children to think of their own pattern and see if the other children can copy them. Continue until all the children have had a go.

### Copycat

The children should stand and form a circle. The game will start when the adult taps one of the children on the shoulder. The child should then perform an action, or a sound and the others should copy. The adult will then tap another child on the shoulder and a new action or sound should be performed. Play should continue until everyone has a turn.

### Team Scavenger Hunt

You will need: ***Cards with pictures of various items to be found.*** Everyone enjoys a scavenger hunt so why not pair up the kids in teams of two or more and allow them to find items on the picture cards. Picture cards are the easiest to use when playing with preschoolers. For best results, give different picture cards to each pair or team so that only one group will be looking for a specified item.

### Where is my Friend?

Play music while the children walk freely around the room. When the music stops, they must crouch down where they are and close their eyes, no peeking! Cover one of the players with a blanket. Once the player is covered tell the others to open their eyes and guess who is under the blanket.

## Hello, My Friend

The players should sit on the floor in a circle with one child in the middle to start. The player who sits in the middle should put on the blindfold being sure they can't peek out. Another player should then join the blindfolded player in the middle of the circle and say, "Hello, my friend. Can you guess who I am?" The blindfolded player then gets three guesses to determine who it is. When the round is over, the player who spoke gets to wear the blindfold and the player who was wearing the blindfold will then choose the next speaker. To make it harder children could put on a different voice!

## Friendship Quilt

Give each child a construction paper square to decorate using the crayons. Be sure they add their names to the squares they create. When the squares are finished punch holes in all four corners using the hole punch. Sew the squares together with the yarn to create the friendship quilt. Display the quilt for everyone to enjoy. Similarly you could use strips of paper to make a chain!

## KS1

### Copy me

Aim: copy the leader's actions and sounds. There is no talking in this game. Teacher becomes the first leader and starts a repetitive action e.g. clapping, or patting head. All children copy. The leader changes the action and children must copy. To make it more difficult teacher can explain that children should start 1 action behind. So when leader is on first action, the children do not copy, but they must remember the action. When the leader starts, their second action children should do the first action. This continues as children remain 1 action behind each time.

### Quiz me

Teacher divide children into mixed ability teams. The aim is for each team is to take part in a quiz and answer as many questions as possible. Teams discuss possible answers then 1 spokesperson shakes the teams instrument or raises their hand when team had an answer (could give them so many seconds to make this harder). Teacher asks questions related to the days/weeks learning and the first team to shake instrument/raise hand can answer. If answer is correct, they score a point. If incorrect, the opposite team get the chance to answer. Teacher changes spokesperson after each round. Round ends when a team has scored 5 points!

### "Apple pie and custard"

(Can say anything - could relate to learning that day!)

Put 1 chair at the front of the class with its back to rest of the children who are sitting on the carpet. Teacher points to a child on the carpet who has to say "apple pie and custard". The aim is to disguise their voice so not to be recognised. The child on the chair has 3 guesses.

### **Magic Pen**

This involved the whole class creating a story together. The story is not written down and is made up spontaneously.

1. Find a suitable pen to be passed around (for now it might have to be an imaginary one)
2. Tell children the pen you are holding is MAGIC because people who hold it tell wonderful stories.
3. No-one is allowed to talk unless they are holding the pen.
4. Teacher starts the story.
5. When teacher has finished the introduction pass pen onto another child who should continue the story for a few sentences.
6. They then pass it on to next person and so on until the last person ends the story (or could come up with a signal beforehand for when to finish the story)

### **20 questions**

One person thinks of an object (or chooses card with picture/word of object on it). Others try to guess what it is by asking questions. The person can only answer yes/no/maybe. Can the item be guessed in 20 questions? A clue may be given if the guessers are on the wrong track.

### **What can it do?**

One player calls out an object and the others have to work in pairs/groups to think of 5 things that can be done with it e.g. tree - climb, chop, grow, fall down and absorb carbon dioxide.

### **I like to.....**

A quick simple memory game that requires no preparation or equipment. Sit the group in a circle. Ask everyone to think of something that they like to do. Then pick someone to start by telling the group for example 'I like to swim'. The person to their right will then tell the group what the first person liked and adding what they like to do, for example 'Fred likes to swim, I like to walk'. This continues right around the circle until the last person has to say what everyone likes to do. Other members of the group can prompt by miming the activity if anyone falls into difficulty.

To make this harder children could add more information e.g. Fred likes to swim in the sea, I like to walk in the woods.

### **Alison is an acrobat in Asia**

Select a letter and individual or teams of children generate a name, profession and place that all begin with that letter e.g. **e** - ~Eddie is an engineer from Edinburgh"

### **Word associations**

One player starts by saying a word. Next player says a word that is connected to the first word and so on e.g. *Egypt- mummy - daddy - beard - santa - Christmas - tree - leaves* (continue until a word is repeated or a connection cannot be made)

### **Friendship Chain**

Each child is given a slip of construction paper. On their paper, they write what they think is the most important quality in a friend. Being a good friend PowerPoint on the server you could use to prompt discussion. Those slips then get taped together to form a chain, which can be hung in the classroom and referred to throughout the year.

### **Line Up!**

Separate everyone into teams. 5 or 6 per team is the ideal number, and if you have mixed ages, mix them up! One person is the caller. He calls out "Everyone please now line up ..." and fills in the blank with a statement such as the suggestions below. All the players race to find the right order and shout when they are finished. To make it harder: try doing some rounds silently - players can only communicate with gestures!

#### **Ideas:**

- Everyone line up in order of age, oldest at the front, youngest at the back
- Everyone line up in first name alphabet order
- Everyone line up by height, shortest first
- Everyone line up according to your birthdays - first in the year goes first
- Most hair at the back, least hair at the front

### **Blindfolded Obstacle**

Sometimes taking the talking out of an activity makes it easier for self-conscious children to get involved. For this activity, you put kids in small groups of three or four and blindfold one of them. The rest of the group must then guide that person through the obstacle course. You can also blindfold the entire group. They'll need to work together to figure out what the obstacle is and how to get through it.

# Playground games

**\*\*Most of these can be adapted for all year groups\*\***

## Freeze!

A well-known playground game, Freeze is deservedly popular with children of all ages. Best played on a dry day or indoors in a hall. One child is chosen to be "it". Whenever "it" catches another child, that child must remain frozen in place, with its feet wide apart. The frozen player can only be "unfrozen" if another child crawls between his legs! The last player to be frozen becomes "it" for the next round.

---

## Duck, Duck Goose

Select one person to be the "Tapper," then have all of the children except for the "Tapper" sit in a circle on the floor. The "Tapper" walks around the outside of the circle and taps each seated child on the head, saying "Duck" with each tap until he or she randomly decides to tap someone and say, "Goose!" The "Goose" runs around the circle after the "Tapper," who tries to get to the "Goose's" vacated spot in the circle and sit down before the "Goose" tags him or her. If the "Goose" does not catch the "Tapper" before he or she sits in the vacated spot, then the "Goose" becomes the "Tapper" and the game begins again. If the "Goose" manages to catch and tag the "Tapper" before he or she sits down, then the "Tapper" is "it" again during the next round.

## Beanbag contests

Divide the children into teams and line them up in rows. Give the child at the front of each row a beanbag. The children must now pass the beanbag from one to the next and back again, in a particular style, which you can decide as appropriate for the age of the children.

For example,

- pass it down the row with the right hand only
- pass it up the row with left hand only
- pass it down the row with both hands
- pass it up the row with right hand over left shoulder
- pass it down the row with left hand over right shoulder
- pass it up the row under the right leg
- pass it down the row under the left leg, and so on

## Hide and seek

One player (the seeker) counts to a given number and everyone else hides. The seeker finds the others. The last one to be found becomes the 'seeker'.

## Sardines

Sardines is the opposite of hide-and-seek. One person is designated to hide while the others count. If you find the hidden person, you join them. Last person to find them loses.

### Silent Ball

A group tosses a ball around. If you drop it, you're out. If you make a bad pass, you're out. If you make a noise, you're out. Last person in wins.

### Red Light, Green Light

One person is the traffic cop. All remaining players stand on the starting line and the traffic cop has their back to them. When the traffic cop says "green light," players try to run to the finish line. When the traffic cop says "red light," they turn around and the other players have to stop. First to pass the finish line wins and becomes the traffic cop.

### "Beanbag"

Children get into groups of 2/3/4 with a beanbag. Place the beanbag in the middle of the group. The teacher shouts commands to the children which they follow e.g. touch your head, touch your toes, jump on one foot etc. As soon as the teacher shouts "beanbag", the children need to grab the beanbag as quick as they can. The person who gets the beanbag first wins.

### Through the hoop

Split the children into groups of about 10 then ask the groups to form circles. Give each group a hoop and ask them to link hands placing the hoop in the circle over the arms of two of the children. The children then have to step through the hoop without unlinking hands. The first team to get the hoop back to where it started wins. Cheaters have to start again!