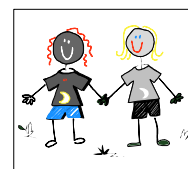


Information and advice from:



Early Development and

Early Years Foundation Stage

Developing Language



Comments vs Questions

We often ask questions when we want to encourage children to talk more. But questions can be *conversation stoppers* e.g. 'What's this?' 'What colour's that?' etc. A chatty child will happily demonstrate their knowledge but for a less confident child or a child with speech difficulties, this often results in silence. A more successful strategy to encourage a child to talk is simply to comment on what they can see or what they are doing e.g. 'Look, you've got a red car. My car is blue'. When we comment, we add language to what they are interested in and we model the words they need to copy if they want to join in the conversation.

If you do need to check a child's understanding, try using a 'cloze' procedure instead i.e. leave a gap for the child to fill in. For example, 'I've got a blue car, your car is'. Wait for a moment but fill in the gap yourself if the child does not respond to avoid putting pressure on them.

Questions can easily be turned into comments. Here are ten things you can say instead of 'What's that?':

- Name the item: "It's a ball"
- Add a describing word: "That ball is *big*" (adding big arms)
- Add an action: "That's a ball. Look, it *rolls*" (add a gesture)
- Add a function: "That's a ball...you can *bounce* it" (show what to do)
- Add a pronoun: "That's *your* ball. This is *my* ball" (point to your child and yourself)
- Add a colour: "That ball is *blue*"
- Give a compliment: "*I like* that ball"
- State a fact: "*I have a ball* too. See?"
- Start a game: "*Let's play* with your ball"
- Make a fun noise: "That ball goes *boing, boing, boing*"

(adapted from www.thespeechdynamic.com/what-is-that)

