

6.1 Understanding and using pronouns: 'he' and 'she'



Why is this important?

Pronouns are words that replace a noun or a person (e.g. the boy – 'he'; the girl – 'she'). Other pronouns include 'I', 'you' and 'they'.



What to do

- Find two character toys – one must be a girl (e.g. Barbie) and the other a boy (e.g. Buzz Lightyear, Spiderman).
- Gather together several everyday items (e.g. brush, cup, spoon, flannel).
- Demonstrate that the toys can do lots of different things (e.g. brush hair, wash face). Say:
 - ★ 'He's washing.'
 - ★ 'She's jumping.'
- Can the child choose the correct character to relate to the pronoun?
 - Share books and use pronouns to talk about what's happening (e.g. 'he's running', 'she's skipping').
- Talk about what children are doing in the park when you are out for a walk, or on the bus. Use a lead-in phrase to help the child relate the pronoun to the male/female, e.g.
 - ★ 'Look at that boy, he's hopping.'
 - ★ 'Can you see that lady? She's eating.'

6.2 Understanding 'behind' and 'in front'



Why is this important?

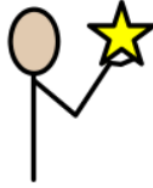
'Behind' and 'in front' are prepositions and are used to describe the placement of objects or people.



What to do

- Gather together a few favourite character toys.
 - Explain that the toys are going to play a game and the child is going to put them in different places. Ask the child to:
 - ★ 'Put Spiderman behind the curtain.'
 - ★ 'Put Barbie in front of the chair.'
 - ★ 'Put teddy in front of the fridge.'
 - You can use things around the room or work with items on the table (e.g. cup, car, book).
Ask the child to put Spiderman 'behind' the cup.
- N.B. remember to sit next to child for this activity so that you are both looking at things from the same perspective.

6.3 Understanding the negative form



Why is this important?

Children begin to understand negatives with 'no' and 'not' and then progress to understanding the reduced form (e.g. 'isn't', 'can't' and 'don't').



What to do

- Gather together some pictures of children doing various actions (e.g. climbing, running, jumping, eating).
 - Put out two pictures and ask:
 - ★ 'Who isn't eating?'
- When the child points to the right picture, reinforce this by repeating the sentence:
 - ★ 'Well done. He isn't eating. He's climbing.'
 - Have another go with two new pictures.

6.4 Understanding functions of body parts



Why is this important?

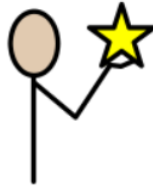
Understanding the functions of body parts follows on from understanding the functions of objects. It allows children to reflect on their own behaviour and essentially on what they need to do (e.g. 'listen' involves using our ears and 'look' using our eyes).



What to do

- Draw a picture of the child (or encourage the child to do this).
- Suggest body parts that need to be added (e.g. hands, legs, ears).
- When the child has finished, ask questions relating to the functions of the various body parts, e.g.
 - ★ 'What can we do with our hands?'
 - Clap, wave, hold things.
 - ★ 'What do we do with our ears?'
 - Listen, hear, wear earrings.
- Find pictures of people performing the different actions and make a scrapbook (e.g. put a picture of hands in the middle of a piece of paper and draw/cut out/print out pictures of people waving, holding knife and fork, throwing a ball).

6.5 Playing sociably and learning to share



Why is this important?

Social play takes place in a natural environment, allowing children to develop and practise their communication skills. To be successful, children need to understand the rules of turn-taking and sharing. This forms the foundation of social-interaction skills for later life.



What to do

- Provide opportunities for the child to engage in play activities with other children of similar ages by involving the child in playgroups, nursery school, parent and toddler groups and visiting places where other children play (e.g. the park).
- Set up activities where two children can play together (e.g. home corner, playing shops, a simple game, taking turns to complete a puzzle).
 - Suggest things that one child could give to another (e.g. one child cooking, the other putting the doll to bed; suggest child one heats a bottle of milk for child two to give to doll).

6.6 Developing expressive language



Why is this important?

As language develops, children need to be able to use more words to make longer sentences.

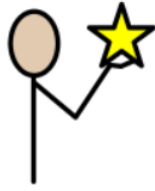
This happens by adding grammatical elements (i.e. plurals, past tense) or by linking two thoughts (e.g. using 'and'/'because') thereby making sentences much longer. Children are ready for this when they have the vocabulary to be able to link three key words in a sentence.



What to do

- Gather together two favourite toys (e.g. doll and teddy). You will need a picture to represent them as well (e.g. draw a picture/take a photo/cut out a picture of a teddy and doll).
- Draw/print out/cut out a picture of someone sitting, standing, running and sleeping.
- Now draw/print out/cut out some pictures of a few common items in the room (e.g. chair, television, table, drawers).
- Put the pictures in three piles and encourage the child to take one picture from each pile to make a sentence:
 - ★ 'Teddy sitting chair.'
- Encourage the child to say the sentence and then make teddy/doll perform the action.
 - Keep one or two words the same (e.g. teddy sitting bed, teddy sitting sofa).

6.7 Understanding and using verbs in the past tense



Why is this important?

Developing the grammatical structures relating to past tense allows children to talk about an event that has happened in the past and contrast this with the here and now. This increases the range of language use and also allows children to talk about things outside the here and now.



What to do

- To elicit past tense, try:
 - ★ After playtime/lunchtime, ask the child who he/she played with and what he/she ate, etc.
 - ★ When playing with toys (e.g. in home corner or with the farm), ask what food the child made for dinner or what the farmer fed the cows, etc.
 - ★ Tell a simple story and ask the child to use the pictures to retell the story using the past tense.
 - ★ Play 'Simon Says'. When the child has performed the action, ask:
 - Adult: 'What did you do?'
 - Child: 'Jumped/danced/ hopped', etc.
 - ★ Use everyday situations to elicit past tense forms (e.g. a train goes past, a child falls over). Ask 'What happened?'

6.8 Generating ideas about the function of objects (semantic links)



Why is this important?

Children need to learn that objects often have more than one function (e.g. ball – throw it, catch it, play football) and that lots of objects perform the same actions (e.g. what flies – butterfly, helicopter, bird, aeroplane).



What to do

- Gather together pictures of objects and put them face down on the table. The child chooses a picture (e.g. chair):
 - ★ Adult: 'What do we do with a chair?'
 - ★ Child: 'Sit on it.'
- Give the child praise and then talk about other objects and their uses.

6.9 Understanding 'why' questions



Why is this important?

'Why' questions help to develop causal relations, that is, something happened because of something else (e.g. the boy's feet are cold because he has no socks). The development of verbal reasoning in this way is very important and is a key stage in language development. It helps children move from the concrete to the more abstract use of language and also to reflect on the world around them.



What to do

- Look at picture books and/or read simple stories together.
- When you have finished, look through the book again and see if the child can tell you something about the pictures or what happened.
 - Ask simple why questions, e.g.
 - ★ 'Why was the little boy crying?'
 - 'He fell in the mud.'
 - ★ 'Why did they have to go home?'
 - 'It was raining.'
 - ★ 'Why was the dog barking?'
 - 'The cat was stuck in the tree.'
- The child doesn't need to respond with 'because ...' as long as he/she understands that the question is looking for a reason. However, for some, eliciting 'because' helps to unlock the rest of the sentence. N.B. Try not to ask too many questions but allow the child to lead some of the discussion about the story.

6.10 Learning to remember and then say the names of three things



Why is this important?

Verbal understanding can be likened to a 'list' of things that need to be remembered in order to carry out a task. If, for example, a three-word instruction is given (e.g. 'Wash doll's face'), the child has to remember 'wash', 'doll' and 'face'. If he/she can't do this, it may be that auditory memory is not yet sufficiently developed.



What to do

- Gather together a selection of pictures of everyday things. These could be cards or cut out from magazines.
 - Place a few cards (i.e. four) face-down on the table.
 - Choose three cards but don't show them to the child.
- Look at the cards and say what they are (e.g. 'I've got a hat, a cup and a pencil').

Ask:

 - ★ 'Can you remember what cards I've got?'
- If the child is right, show your cards and reinforce:
 - ★ 'Well done! A hat, a cup and a pencil!'
- If the child finds it difficult or remembers only one or two items, repeat what cards you have, emphasising the key words (e.g. 'I've got hat, cup and pencil').
- Try the activity with some action pictures (e.g. 'doll is sitting', 'boy jumping bed'). Can the child copy these three-word phrases?