



# Expressing and Communicating Ideas

## CD

Children who have speech and language difficulties may lack the words or the communication skills to express their ideas and thoughts and will need your additional support.

### ▲●■ Links to Area of Learning

In Chapter 6, we looked at the barriers faced by children who have speech and language difficulties or delay when it comes to responding to their experiences and expressing feelings using language. How much harder it must be to use language and communication to express your thoughts and ideas to others. Thinking is an invisible process involving both visualising and also silent words. Often, a child with difficulties might be well able to visualise what he or she would like to happen next but have no idea of how to put this into words and communicate it to others. This can again lead to tremendous frustration and a feeling that one's thoughts and ideas simply do not matter. This can profoundly affect self-esteem and lead to rather quiet and withdrawn children, or very angry ones. Your role becomes one of finding the key to allow each and every child to express and communicate to others about how they are thinking and the ideas that they have. Some children will need continual support to start with, but the aim is for them to gradually be comfortable in their own way of expressing their thoughts and ideas.

In the usual pathway of development, children begin to express their thoughts and ideas to others simply by repeating actions or getting on with it and 'doing'. In time, they use representation (such as gestures and movement, art work and early mark-making) to express ideas and begin to find the words to speak them. They become more and more proficient in using language and other forms of communication to share the things that they create. They can express their ideas through music, dance, movement, painting and craft activity as well as through words. Most children can be helped to talk about their personal intentions, describing what they were trying to do. They will respond to comments and questions from yourselves or other children, entering into dialogue about their creations. They also begin to learn how to make comparisons and create new connections in their thinking and ideas.

Even at this young age, children will be developing preferences for which is the best medium to express their ideas with. Therefore, if you can offer the right choices, you should be able to find outlets for each child – whatever the level of language. In this way, all children can be helped to express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.

### ▲●■ Assessment records

You will find an assessment record for working out which skills and competencies the child has already acquired on the next two pages. As a starting point, look out for and work on behaviours that are sometimes, but not always, demonstrated.



# Assessment sheet: Being Creative – Expressing and Communicating Ideas

Communication, Language and Literacy Creative Development: Expressing and Communicating Ideas

Name:..... Key person:.....

enter date observed

	Never	Sometimes	Always
<b>Development matters</b>			
Repeating play patterns			
What I do now			
Reach out for a favourite toy			
Show preferences in toys and playthings			
Explore by repeating patterns of play*			
Show preferences in activities			
Using representation			
Move in a way that communicates excitement			
Use gestures to represent words (such as pointing to what I want)			
Adopt body language to represent happy/grumpy/sad*			
Enjoy painting			
Sometimes say that my drawings represent something			
Enjoy using craft and construction to make things			
Expressing ideas without words			
Willing to express myself through movement			
Willing to express myself through music*			
Willing to express myself through dance			
Willing to express myself through art			
Expressing ideas through words			
Indicate what I want to do simply by getting on with it			
Communicate to you what I want to do using a gesture and words			
Share a new idea with another child using gestures and actions			
Use words to volunteer an idea			

<b>Speaking out</b>	Share a creative activity with another child		
	Volunteer a simple idea during group time		
	Assert myself appropriately to other children*		
	Tell other children all about my creation		
	Share a creative plan with another child		
<b>Discussions and questions</b>	Willing to answer simple questions about my creation		
	Chat easily with others while creating		
	Gauge what the listener already knows when discussing topics*		
	Talk to another child about what they are doing		
	Show interest in other children's ideas too		
<b>Making links</b>	Ask why/what/how questions		
	Recall memories as I create and discuss		
	Develop my creations in the light of what I have seen others do		
	Develop my ideas in the light of what we have talked about*		
	Express my ideas through role play		
	Express my ideas through imaginative play and creativity		
	Develop my ideas from day to day and talk about what I am doing		

### **Early Learning Goals:**

Express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials, suitable tools, imaginative and role-play, movement, designing and making, and a variety of songs and musical instruments.

### ▲●■ Look, listen and note

Try to tune in to how children with speech and language difficulties express themselves using these kinds of observations.

- Start by observing how and where children play, making a note of how long they remain interested in an activity and what choices they make. This will give you an idea about their interests and what is important to them, even if a child cannot express this in words.
- Observe what kinds of situations children appear to be at their most relaxed or most creative. For example, are they happiest when expressing themselves through music, art, design, movement, dance or imaginative play?
- Some children with communication difficulties have unusual patterns of attention. Observe whether a child is most responsive to movement, to touch, to smell or to things to look at. Sometimes you can see this because the child behaves in a way to keep certain senses busy (for example, lining up toys in a certain way because that appearance gives them pleasure).
- Keep a note of the gestures and signs that children use and note the situations in which these are used to express themselves. Perhaps you can introduce more signs to aid language and communication? Discuss this with any speech and language therapist involved if you feel it might be a useful option.
- Note how a child combines vocalisations, movement, gestures and body language to express or communicate how they are thinking and feeling.

### ▲●■ Effective practice

- Plan activities that include the choices and interests of the less vocal children – this makes it clear to them that their preferences and choices are important too.
- For children who do not have much language, make sure that there are always plenty of non-verbal ways of expressing their thoughts and ideas, such as through music or art.
- Always respond to the way children are expressing their ideas and thoughts even if they cannot put these into words – in other words, ‘read’ their behaviour, rather than expect them always to tell you things.
- Offer a wide range of choices of different resources, media and tools when a child is about to play creatively. This way, you can encourage the creativity and expression of children who might not be able to explain to you what they need or what they are aiming for.
- It might take longer than usual for a child with language difficulties to tell you about their creations. Make sure you allow yourself time to be patient and encouraging as you support the child in expressing opinions and ideas. Slow the pace down and keep your own sentences short and positive.

### ▲●■ How to use the play plans

On pages 69–74 you will find six play plans for those skills marked with an asterisk on the assessment sheets on pages 66 and 67. Each play plan contains eight interventions that you could try. There are two blank spaces to add your own personalised interventions onto each play plan.