

# Afasic CYMRU

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Charity No. 1045617

## Helping your school age child put words together



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LOTTERY FUNDED

Children build their abilities to put words together upon their experiences of playing, listening and understanding words and sentences.

Young children start by using single words and gradually put two words together then three and four, using the words they know. Alongside building their own sentences, children often use whole expressions that they have heard and learnt e.g.: "Where's-it-gone?" or "Fish and chips".

What a child says is influenced by other skills such as their understanding, vocabulary, memory, ability to get things in the right order and their emotional state.

During their primary school years, children typically develop the way they put words together. They gradually use longer sentences and more complex connecting words to help sequence their ideas and explain events. What they say starts to sound well-formed and more grammatical. However, they may still make errors e.g.: "I caught it."

Building more complex sentences will help your child to use talking to:

- ✓ Join in conversations and talk to friends
- ✓ Tell you about what has happened or how they feel
- ✓ Explain, plan, negotiate and ask questions
- ✓ Tell a story
- ✓ Develop their reasoning and thinking

Using talking in these ways will also help your child to learn and with reading and writing.

If you are concerned about your child's talking, seek advice from a qualified speech and language therapist.

Read this leaflet for general ideas of how you can help your child put words together to express what they mean.

## Help your child to put words together to build sentences

Please adapt suggestions to take account of your child's age and stage of development.

**Let your child start the conversation!** Wait for him/her to say something. Some children need time to think of what to say and time to find the words (allow up to 10 seconds).

**In general, avoid correcting your child, avoid finishing their sentences for them, avoid asking multiple questions and avoid asking them to say it again.** Instead try the following positive strategies that build confidence.

**Be encouraging and accept what your child says even when you're not sure what he/she means.** This lets your child know that what he/she says is important.

**Repeat the child's sentence back to him/her correctly so that he/she hears a good example or model.** Child: "Score goal" Adult: "You scored a goal?"

**Build on what your child says by expanding a little on what he/she says, adding one idea.** For example, Child: "I score goal" Adult: "You scored a goal in football! Great!"

**Talk about things in real situations and about things that your child may be interested in. Encourage your child to talk about lots of different things.** For example, going to a park with a friend, travelling on a train, visiting a pet shop, and looking at pictures in different types of books can generate ideas for things that your child may be interested in talking about.



Help your child sequence their thoughts and ideas in the here and now.

It helps to understand that things can happen in a certain order. Talk to the child about what you are doing/what is happening using words like first, next, then, last. Model this lots and lots of times with different everyday routines (bath time, teatime), activities like craft or cooking and during a play activity or looking at pictures in a book together.

This can be extended to remembering what has already happened and re-telling it. For example, explaining a recipe, remembering a day trip, retelling a favourite part in a story or a film. Instead of asking too many questions, offer an idea and share the talking. Here are some more ideas:

- Use a wall calendar to help you recall and retell what has happened during the week.
- Take a few photos to make a 'photo story' of a few steps in a familiar routine or when you're out anywhere, that you can then talk about. For example: Making toast, building a sandcastle, or feeding the dog.
- Bring home an object from a trip out. Use this object as a prompt to help a child remember what you did and what happened. For example, a leaf, a shell, a ticket.

Retelling a short sequence will show your child how to tell you what's happened, will help with telling stories and for older children, with writing a story.

Talk with your child about what to do when he/she finds it difficult to explain something. Let your child know it's ok to say, "I need help" or "it's tricky." Help by giving more time, starting off and giving examples. You could also try prompting with words to help your child join up or sequence their ideas.

For example, Child: "We saw a rabbit" Adult: "We saw a rabbit *and next to it...*"

