

The Whistle Stop



About Language Express

Language Express provides speech and language assessment and therapy services for young children in Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville counties. Services are free and are available from birth until the end of Junior Kindergarten. Don't wait and see! We can help your child and provide helpful ideas for you and your child's caregivers or teachers.

When To Get Help:

- If your child is not meeting all of the communication milestones for his or her age. Check the milestones at www.language-express.ca.
- If your child is stuttering.
- If your child's play or social interaction seems different from other children the same age.
- If your child's voice doesn't sound right.
- If your child has a diagnosis such as hearing loss, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or developmental delay.

Language Express accepts referrals for children from birth until November 30 of the year they turn 4. **For example, children born in 2015 must be referred by Nov. 30, 2019.**

Call us for more information or to make a referral

1-888-503-8885

There is More to Communication Than Talking

Learning to talk is only one part of learning to be a good communicator.

When we have a conversation we do a lot more than just say words. We look each other in the eye, we take turns, we use facial expressions and body language, we make gestures, we pay attention to what our communication partner is paying attention to, and we stay on topic. We can read a lot from a person's tone of voice as well.

These non-verbal interaction skills, or "social communication" skills, usually develop naturally during the day to day interactions babies and children share with their parents and caregivers. It is a process that takes time and lots of practice. That's why it's so important to get face-to-face and play, sing, talk, and read with children many times every day.

When a child is having trouble learning about social communication, it is harder to learn language, to join in conversations, and to play with other children. There are many things parents and caregivers can do to help children learn the rules of social communication. Flip the page for some ideas.

Turn off the TV, tablet, and phone!

One of the best things parents can do to encourage social communication learning is to limit screen time and spend more time talking and playing with their children. You are your child's favourite plaything and she will learn best when she is having fun with you.



Social communication difficulties can be associated with other developmental concerns. Talk to your family doctor if your child loses social skills or language skills, or if your child does not:

- Smile at people when they smile at him
- Respond consistently when you say his name
- Pretend and play "make believe"
- Show an interest in other children
- Enjoy playing with you
- Make appropriate eye contact

Build some of these ideas into your daily routines to help your child develop social communication skills:

Try This

Infants



- Respond to your baby's noises and gestures by imitating him, and he will soon learn to make more noises or gestures in response.
- Follow your baby's gaze and focus on the same thing. Talk about what you both see. Eventually your baby will follow your gaze too.

Toddlers



- When your child is trying to tell you something with words or gestures, **STOP** what you are doing, **LOOK** at your child, **LISTEN**, and respond. Then **WAIT** for your child's response. Don't rush communication. Children need lots of time to understand what they hear, and to think about what they want to say.
 - Child: Points out the window and says, "Doo buh!"
 - You: Get face-to-face at his eye level and respond, "Yes, that's John's school bus." Then WAIT expectantly for your toddler to take a turn.

Preschoolers



- Play lots of turn taking games like board games and ball games, or take turns turning pages in a book or going down a slide. Say "Your turn, my turn..."
- Encourage pretend play. Pretending to cook or shop or take the car to the garage provides fun opportunities to practice social communication skills. Try imitating what your child does and then adding something. For example if she is pretending to pour tea, you could pretend to pour tea, then spill and wipe up the mess.