



What did you do at school today?



Possible ideas for starting a conversation about your child's learning.

Top tip * Help to develop your child's conversation skills by modelling this for them.

Body language is important

- Show them that a good conversation starts with eye contact. You may need to sit together or bend down. Try not to ask or answer a question if you aren't facing your child.
- Show them you are listening by nodding in response to their comments.
- Use facial expressions to show you are engaged, this will help the conversation look and feel genuine.



Encourage them

- Make sure you praise achievements no matter how small. If your child has made a mistake or feels they haven't accomplished something acknowledge how they are feeling and ask them if they can think how to put it right or improve next time. It's far better for children to identify their own solution.
- Reinforce what they are saying by nodding, smiling and asking questions about what they are saying to show you are interested.
- Use 'door openers' like "hmm" "Really .. tell me more" "That's interesting, explain it again"



Lead by example

- Model sentence openers "I had a great day today because.." or "Can I tell you one thing about my day.."
- Share your day with them first, this way you give them ideas and prompts about the type of information they could tell you. "Today I really enjoyed...." Or "I found this tricky today but I had a go" Allow your children to ask you questions about your day.



Top tip * Don't expect your child to give you details of all aspects of the school day, encourage them to think about just one thing they want to tell you.

Questioning

- Avoid vague or very broad questions like "What did you do at school today?" Knowing about school events, the theme or topic will enable you to ask specific questions.
- Avoid closed questions that can only be answered with a "yes" or "no" as they close down the conversation.



Timing

- Try not to expect your child to launch into a recount of the school day as soon as you pick them up. Give them time to relax and recharge first.
- Talk at the dinner table as a family. This way children learn that they have a safe time to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Bedtime can a good time to talk if instigated by your child wanting to chat.



Top Tip * make sure you try not to interrupt once your child does start to talk about their day. Often children talk at a slower pace than perhaps we might and usually move onto other topics. If this happens try saying "I'm interested to know more about..." to get them back on track.

Good communication is important for now and later. It helps children to develop self confidence, warm relationships and feelings of worth.

Poor communication leads to frustrating relationships, conflict and feelings of worthlessness.

Learning to be a good communicator is a good investment.

Further reading

Winning ways to talk with young children. <http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/22-649.pdf>