50 things to do before you're five™

Using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five to Support Language Development

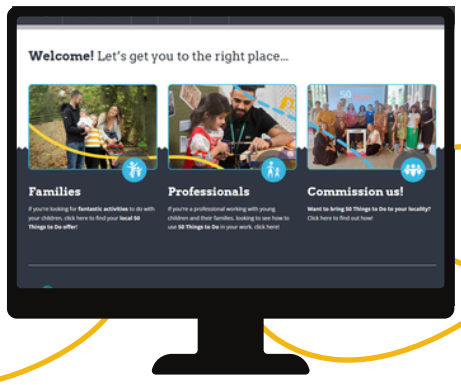
What is 50 Things to Do Before You're Five?

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is a multi-platform offer, free for families, comprising of an app and website, also supported by a range of printable resources and social media campaigns.

50 Things to Do is based on the simple notion that access to fun, **low or no-cost experiences** with your family, indoors and outdoors, is a great way to support children's development. Our activities help children thrive, by learning through play and establishing healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

50 Things to Do was developed by a team of health, education and early years specialists, in Bradford, using theories of learning, child development and play. But what parents really need to know is that **50 Things to Do** is full of loads of **fun stuff** to do with their children!

50 Things to Do can be used by nurseries, schools and community organisations, health visiting teams, or by anyone who wants to improve outcomes for young children.



Our Digital Offer

Our localised app and websites are designed for parents, it has no child facing content, and our intention is that parents use it for inspiration. They contain drop-down boxes, to help families engage with each activity, as well as local events. We also provide support for families whose children have special educational needs.

Our printed resources

- ✓ Card packs
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Leaflets
- ✓ QR code keyrings
- ✓ QR code sticker
- ✓ Bespoke resources as requested

Further fantastic resources for professionals, to download or print, can be found on the National 50 Things to Do website at: www.50thingstodo.org/professionals

"Using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five in our setting has made a big difference with communication for the children, because they are so eager to come and tell the other children what they are doing."

Roselands Infant School Eastbourne

Context

Currently in the UK **1.9 million children** are **struggling** with talking and understanding words *(Speech and Language UK)*. This issue is more prevalent in areas of disadvantage with around **50% of children** who live in areas of **social disadvantage** starting school with language delay *(Bercow – 10 years on)*.

Early identification and intervention is the key to closing the gap. Professionals working with young children and their families play a vital role in supporting children to be **confident communicators** and supporting parents to provide a language rich home learning environment.

Supporting children's speech and language is everyone's business and no child should be left behind because of a speech, language and communication need.

How 50 Things can help

By using 50 Things to Do, professionals are:

- Supporting the development of key skills such as **listening, attention, turn taking and understanding** through playful activities.
- Providing/sharing language rich experiences that **expose children to new vocabulary.**
- Working collaboratively with parents to **create a language rich home learning environment.**
- Suggesting words that can be used to during each activity and build upon these to **encourage the natural development of language.**

When you embed 50 Things to Do Before You're Five into your practice you are providing **playful experiences** which help to support children's language development and contributing to improved life chances.

By encouraging positive interactions and improved communication, you are helping families bond. You are also **improving parents' confidence** in supporting the development of children's language, literacy and communication skills. We know that this **positively impacts** on academic achievement at primary and secondary school ages.

By encouraging your families to play and read together, you are having a **positive impact on the whole family's mental wellbeing**, reducing stress and boredom, while **promoting feelings of joy and happiness**.

Put simply, when children engage in fun, playful activities, they love to talk about it!

We are **passionate** about encouraging families to **engage in fun and playful activities** together. Our app is designed as a **tool for parents** to access information, our app is **not** designed for children. We would encourage families to **limit use of their phones** when playing and interacting with their children. Spending **quality time** together has **long term benefits** for both children and their parents.

Promoting the foundations of language development for young children

Listening

Encouraging children to listen out for sounds and identify sounds helps to develop their phonological awareness. Activities such as **#34 Woodland Wandering** can be used to encourage children to listen and identify sounds around them. Listening to and joining in with songs and rhymes **#6 Rhyme Time** is also really important for children to develop an understanding of rhythm, rhythm and repetition. These skills can help support children to start speaking words and supports with later reading skills.

Attention

When children engage in play that is fun and interesting they become deeply involved in what they are doing, when they do this they are developing their attention and concentration skills. As attention develops children begin to learn how to switch their attention between different tasks. Engaging in **#45 Wonderful Waiting Games** like 'Simon says' and 'eye spy' helps to support children to focus their attention.

Understanding

Different play activities introduces children a wide range of vocabulary and gives them a real life context for children to apply their language skills. Children are more likely to understand new words and phases when they experience them through play, activities such as **#8 Bubbles** gives children the opportunity to hear words such as 'bubble', 'pop', 'more', 'again', 'blow', once children have heard these words lots of times they will begin to understand and try use them in context.

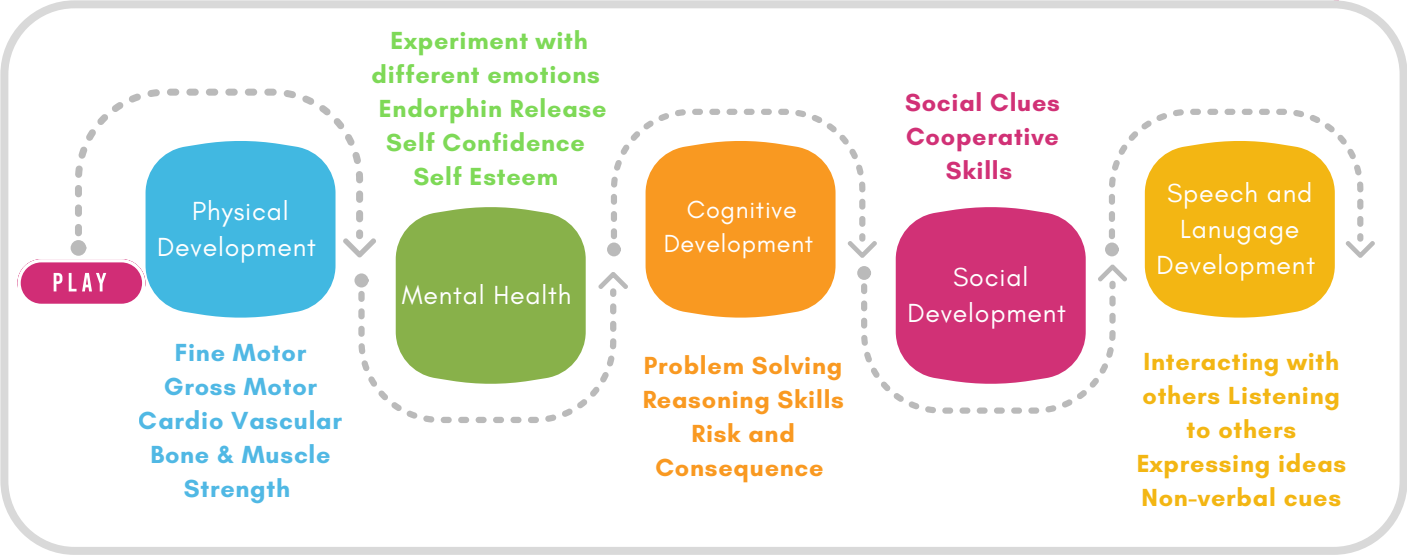
Turn Taking

Play is a fantastic way to support turn-taking skills, as very young babies children love to respond to close interactions with their care givers, developing their early communication skills. When engaging in **#1 Get To Know You**, parents can talk to their baby but leave gaps to give the baby an opportunity to communicate back, this may be through gurgles, babbles or copying sticking out their tongue. This back and forth communication is the foundation of turn taking in conversation.

The importance of play

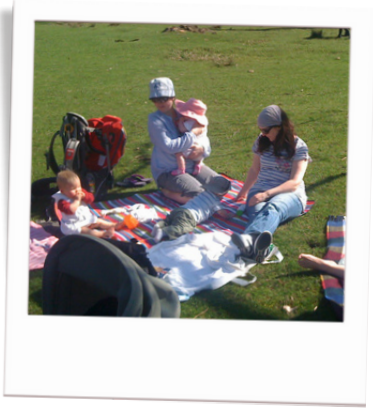
The impact of play on language development

We are passionate about promoting play. It underpins all development and learning for young children.



Play is an essential part of a child's development, especially when it comes to language development. When children engage in playful experiences they are exposed to a rich world of language, through play children are exposed to new words and phrases. Whether its naming objects or describing actions, children's vocabulary starts to grow.

Building new vocabulary through play



Play opens up a world of new words, is it easier for children to understand new words when they experience them. For example, if a child engages in **#30 Yummy Picnic** they will get to experience new words using all their senses. They get to learn the names for different food and drinks like 'apple', 'orange', 'water' but they are also exposed to descriptive language such as 'juicy', 'sour', 'sweet'.

The 50 Things activities are designed to be repeated as children grow, through repeated play children hear and use new words multiple times, this helps to reinforce their understanding and develop a rich vocabulary bank.

The 50 Things app has a '**Key Words**' section which provides inspiration for vocabulary that can be used. These words can be used to give you ideas to use during play or can be shared with parents to give them ideas of words they can use at home.

"Through play, children can express their thoughts, ideas and feelings, building essential communication skills. Play stimulates creativity and innovation, creates a solid foundation for literacy and ignites a lifelong love for learning."

National Literacy Trust, The Power of Play to Boost Early Language. 2024

Supporting a language rich home learning environment

Working collaboratively

Working in partnership with parents and families is central to supporting the best outcomes for the children and families we support. When parents are actively involved in their child's play, research shows that there will be a significant impact on improving children's learning.

50 Things to Do is the **ideal tool** to **inspire activities for families to engage in at home**, encouraging learning, exploring and making together. It helps to develop a respectful relationship between the you and the parent. Parents and carers have **rich knowledge** of their child which we need to tap into, when we encourage professionals and families to share the activities they have done together it helps to foster a environment where **open communication** is valued.

"It has helped with sharing home learning and linking what we do at the nursery to the 50 Things as part of our curriculum. This has created more of a holistic approach as parents can really get involved at home."

"The quality of the HLE is a key predictor of a child's early language ability and future success; positive experiences can have lasting and life changing impacts."
Improving the home learning environment, HM Government. National Literacy Trust, 2018.

Here are our top tips to support language development through play:

Minimise distractions

Once you have your inspiration from our app or website, **move away from your devices.**

Get down to the child's level

When interacting with your children, make sure that you are **face to face**, at **eye level**.

Gain the child's attention

Using **gentle touch** and calling a child's **name** to get their attention, before modelling new words.

Let the child lead the play

Children are able to **explore their own interests** and ideas when given time to freely play.

Offer choices

During playtime, offer choices, for example: **"Would you like the ball or the car?"**

Limit the number of questions and reduce pressure

When asking a child a question, reduce pressure by giving them **time to respond**. If they don't answer, model this for them. For **every question** you ask, we would recommend that you make **five new comments** to engage the children.

The impact in numbers

Speech and Language Development

"Children who struggle to talk and understand words are six times more likely to be behind in English and eleven times more likely to be behind in Maths at age 11. They are more likely to have a mental health problem and to break the law. As adults, they are twice as likely to have periods of unemployment." **Speech and Language UK.**

64%

of parents said that, since using **50 Things to Do** , they communicate more purposefully with their child whilst they are playing.

86%

of parents said that the **50 Things to Do** activities provide different opportunities to communicate with their child.

Supporting the home learning environment

Evidence suggests that what parents do with their children at home child's positively influences their health and wellbeing, as well as being far more impactful to their future achievements than their social class or level of education.

"Children absorb enthusiasm and a positive attitude towards learning from their relationships with adults at home. A parent who feels it is his or her role and believes they can make a difference, models positive interest in learning." **The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment, DfES.**

70%

of parents said that, since using **50 Things to Do**, their child has had **more opportunities to socialise within their local community.**

Parental Confidence

"A growing number of studies are finding associations between parental phone use and children's language development." **Miriam Mikhelson and Kaya de Barbaro, University of Texas at Austin.**

When parents feel competent in their parenting role they are more likely to be engaged in their child's learning and development. This then supports the child's vocabulary and learning. "An individual's belief in their ability to be successful in the role of parenting (i.e., confidence) is an essential component of the quality and sustainability of parenting behaviours." **Belsky and Jaffee (2006) The Multiple Determinants of Parenting**

"It's exhausting to be a parent in any circumstance, but it's much more exhausting to be a parent when you don't have the resources that other families have." **Lew-William**.

67%

of parents said that, since using the **50 Things to Do Before You're 5** app they feel more confident to try new things with their children.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is a free resource for practitioners and families to use in 24 areas of the British Isles.

You can download the app here:

Or find your local website here:

The local website will give details of the team leading the initiative in your area, get in touch with them to see what additional resources are available for you to use.

Calderdale 1
Bradford 2
Leeds 3
Oldham 4
Kirklees 5
Wakefield 6
Sheffield 7
Birmingham 8
Warwickshire 9
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough 10
Norfolk 11
Central Bedfordshire 12
Oxfordshire 13
Hertfordshire 14
West Berkshire 15
Southwark 16
East Sussex 17
Jersey 18
Suffolk 19
Fife 20
Coventry 21
Hounslow 22
Portsmouth 23

Can't see us in your area?

50 Things to Do Local offers are commissioned by agencies, often based in local authorities. If you are are interested in finding out more, do get in touch.

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