

# Communication Skills & General Knowledge

**What is it?** Communication is the ability to clearly communicate one's needs and to understand others (i.e., both talking and listening). General knowledge is an interest in the outside world.

**Why is it important?** Children who can communicate well—as both listeners and talkers—and who are curious to learn about the world around them, are children who are prepared to succeed—at school and throughout life.



## **Don't just talk—spend time doing active listening**

- Really pay attention to what your child is saying.
- Look for opportunities to model good listening skills. Be flexible and know how to read your child's cues. Giving your child your attention will encourage him or her to open up and talk to you.
- Talk about the weather, what your child did in school, plan a trip together, or talk about your day—whatever is of interest to you and your child.



## **Be available to your child**

- Enjoy your meals together at the dinner table. This shows your child that “we always have time for one another.” It also promotes a sense of belonging within the family.
- There are many things that demand our attention, but none is as important as your child.

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## Ask your children about their day

- Find a comfortable time to talk about your child's day. Model this for your child by talking about your own day.
- Ask open-ended questions, such as "What happened at school?" and "What did you do outside?" Asking such questions will lead to more conversation than asking a question that only has a simple "yes" or "no" answer.
- Try making a meal together. You can find out about each other's likes and dislikes, as well as help your child make sense of things that are happening around him or her.



## Encourage your child

- Children need encouragement to feel good about themselves. Children who are confident are more likely to try new things.
- Communication requires confidence, so it is important to respect your child's efforts and never make fun of his or her mistakes.
- Modelling works best when you are trying to teach children something new. From learning a new sport, new song or new language, to going to a new place for the first time, life is full of opportunities to learn new things together!



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## **Cultivate an open, honest relationship with your child**

- Let your child ask questions and express his or her fears. This teaches your child to talk about things that are troubling him or her.
- Be open about issues that directly involve your child's frame of mind and emotional well-being.
- If your child is interested in something, show him or her that you are available to help and to give guidance and answers.



## **Be aware of things that are important to your child**

- Talk about your child's favourite books, toys and movies. In turn, your child will want to learn about the things that are important to you and others.
- This will benefit your child as he or she learns how to socialize, make friendships, and communicate with peers.

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## Model communication skills from the very start

- When holding your baby, respond to what she or he does—if she giggles, you giggle; if he smiles, you smile. Pitch your voice high and low as you make different facial expressions.
- Put a variety of safe and interesting things near your baby (e.g., touch-and-feel books, a child's mirror, a colourful mobile). Describe to your baby what he or she is seeing and touching.
- Play "Name that Thing": Wherever you are, name the items you see around you and your baby.

## Encourage imagination, curiosity and problem solving

- While reading your child's favourite book, change some of the most important words in the story. Do it in a fun and obvious way so that your child will catch on and then provide you with the original story line.
- Put an item that will make a distinct sound into two matching containers (e.g., two containers with dry rice and two with water). Let your child shake the containers and match the sounds.
- Play "Name that Emotion": In books and on TV, ask your child to guess what a character is feeling, why the character is feeling that, and what he or she might need.



**For more information, visit**

[www.tpsls.on.ca](http://www.tpsls.on.ca)

[www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)