

Speakable

A magazine with news and articles about communication and confidence

SPEAKABLE

Tips to stimulate communication skills in preschool children

Even in preschool ages, communication must be monitored and stimulated. Here are some tips!



Using special interests for engagement in children

Great ways to boost a child's focus and performance through their special interest areas

Speakable Team
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Introduction

Hello achievers,

Last year was a huge challenge for many businesses and people, but we all kept a strong-minded focus on providing services with excellence to our clients and continuously adapt to new procedures. Our nonstop growth just reflects this dedication and focus on innovative solutions to clients.

Speakable is perfectly able to provide both in-person and remote sessions for the best outcomes of our clients. We appreciate your ongoing support and you can always count on us! Other innovations include our weekly blogposts about speech pathology, learning difficulties, communication confidence and much more, as well as our new product, the Speakaboo Cards to develop phonics and speech abilities. Complementing the release of the Speakaboo Cards, we are proud to announce our special Vietnamese Accent Reduction program and our contribution to the World Food Program,

Our new issue is full of cutting-edge articles to inspire parents, students, teachers, speech pathologists and other health specialists.

We hope that you enjoy our third issue! Please feel free to share your reading experience and to give your feedback for us to be better and better!

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Outdoor activities to stimulate language and communication



Finally, the warm days have arrived in Australia, allowing children and their families to enjoy holiday break doing many activities together. Such days can be used not only for fun and resting, but also to stimulate children's language and communication skills. Such activities don't need to seem real stimulation activities, you can engage children in everyday activities and simply direct some details in order to obtain expected outcomes. Check out some of these activities to enjoy during warm days:

- **Outdoor walks or road trips.** Walking is an amazing activity to keep any person less sedentary and to stimulate mindfulness, having sensorial experiences to calm the mind against stressful events from studies, work or personal matters. Simple walks outdoor or road trips can be especially beneficial to children when such sensorial experiences become topics for discussion, such as differentiating cloud shapes, leaves' colours, characteristics of bugs and birds, sounds from nature and so on. The simple discussion about these topics stimulates the child's imagination and vocabulary. For small children, a fun game is to locate specific things, a good challenge for attention, vocabulary and focus. [Here](#) is an example of a guide to locate things outdoors and [here](#) one for road trips.
- **Plan day trips.** Going to the beach, to a park, to a relative's house, or any other place might be an interesting moment to discuss items to carry with oneself, remember what not to forget and stimulate logical thinking about which items do not match to the activity. See two good examples to be used with a child when planning a day trip [here](#) and [here](#).
- **Summer journal.** It is very helpful to keep a journal where the child describes all activities, plans and happenings experienced every day. With this, the child will not only have a good register of the Summer to share with teachers and classmates when classes are back, but it will stimulate writing skills.

Outdoor activities to stimulate language and communication

- **Talk about everything.** No matter the child's age, talking is the key for emotional bond, for better understanding the child's way of thinking and reinforcing trust throughout the child's whole life. Talking about the weather, planned activities for the day, favourite songs and movies, even expectations for the moment to get back to school. The more a child speaks and listens, the more the child's language and communication skills are developed.

These four activities would be awesome and very engaging for children of any age, stimulating their language and communication skills, but also reinforcing family bonds, mindfulness, imagination, focus and emotional balancing. Do you know other interesting activities to stimulate language and communication during Summer? Tell us!

NEWS: Speakaboo Cards is available for parents and specialists



The year of 2021 has just started and Speakable is proud to release its innovative product for reading, writing and speaking skills development of its clients. Binh Doan, the owner and lead SLP of Speakable, is the creator of the **Speakaboo Cards** as an evolved adaption from the [Spalding Phonograms](#).

As a derivative from the phonograms, the Speakaboo Cards are based on multisensory instructions. Learners see, hear, say and write the phonograms using all sensory channels to the brain, improving retention and providing opportunities for practice.

The **Speakaboo Cards** follow the Spalding program so teaching the sound is integrated with handwriting instruction. Precise handwriting is as important as precise pronunciation. Unless learners write, they do not see the correct symbols for the sounds and may not readily recognise them when reading.

The Speakaboo Cards are not only a great tool for the literacy development of children, but also a powerful instrument to reinforce communication skills for people who have English as a second language as well as individuals experiencing neurodiversity conditions such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and similar learning difficulties.

Anyone can purchase the Speakaboo Cards for the use at home, classrooms or clinics. It costs \$60 and part of the cost is directed for [corporate social responsibility initiatives undertaken by Speakable](#) since its foundation. Feel free to contact us by [telephone](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [email](#) or by [visiting our clinic](#) to purchase your Speakaboo Cards deck!

Stimulating social skills at home



Neurodiversity can impact children's lives in many ways. Some of these ways are easily measurable such as school performance or medical diagnoses, but some ways are just too subjective, which includes behavioural traits and social skills. No one can be truly happy if not feeling connected to other people, loving and being loved. Because of this, stimulation of social skills is essential to help children interact with their families, classmates, teachers and people from the community.

While there are specific therapies to stimulate social skills towards children experiencing neurodiversity, parents, siblings and other close people can do some activities which help develop children's social skills. We have listed some of the most effective and easiest ones for you to perform with your children:

- **Perspective discussion.** This activity can be performed anytime you are watching a movie, animation, series or even animated sequences in a videogame. You can pause a specific moment and ask questions such as *"Why is that character crying?"*, *"What do you think this person is feeling now"*, and similar questions to stimulate imagination and reasoning from the child.
- **Interaction through toys.** By using puppets, action figures and dolls, the child can play and make interactions related to daily situations. It could be the preparation for a birthday party, the break time at school, the visit to grandparents' house, going to a restaurant with parents etc. These simulations can stimulate the use of prompts such as *"What to say to someone who is celebrating birthday?"*, *"How to order some food to the waiter?"*, *"What should you do after annoying someone unintentionally?"*. Even the electronic game **The Sims** could be used for such stimulation, with discussions regarding how the characters should behave, what they should do and so on. It is especially interesting to use The Sims to analyse characters' *Needs* (such as hunger, fun, social etc.) and discuss about these Needs and how to satisfy them.

Stimulating social skills at home

- **Character role play.** A very useful strategy to stimulate social skills and awareness of other people's emotions is the use of role-playing activities. In a very similar way of the interaction through toys above, but this time the child, parents, friends and other participants will assume different roles. After the play, a quick talk about things that happened would be interesting. If the child is not so young, there is the opportunity of using TRPGs (tabletop role playing games) developed especially for the stimulation of social skills. The most recent and famous is [Critical Core](#).
- **Virtual play.** Solutions such as [FaceTime](#) or [other virtual playdates apps](#) can help children feel closer to their friends and relatives, virtually playing and interacting in ways that they can feel stimulated to demonstrate social skills, such as asking things with clarity, acknowledging what the friend or relative might be feeling and so forth.
- **Telling short stories.** It is always interesting to comprehend children's mindset and worldview through their imagination when telling stories or telling stories to them. By questioning characters' attitudes and feelings, children are stimulated to recognise behavioural patterns and how to react to them.

The five activities above are just a few examples of activities that stimulate a child's social skills and awareness of their own emotions and others'. How about you, how do you help develop your child's social skills?

Therapeutic use of tabletop role-playing games



Photo taken as a frame from video [Boys React to Girls Playing Dungeons and Dragons \(DnDnG\)](#)

Over the years, many therapeutic strategies have been developed for the most different needs and conditions, helping children and adults reach the planned outcomes with lower stress and higher comfort. Among the many options of therapy tools, games are among the essential ones for the expected bonding and engagement of children, games that include **tabletop role-playing games**, or TRPGs.

Famous in the whole world due to the success of **Dungeons & Dragons (D&D)**, TRPGs used to be restricted to introverted and self-isolated social groups, who usually suffered from social stigma. More recently, a kind of “geek wave” dominated pop culture and helped invert the image of TRPG players into cool people. You can see scenes of D&D being played in [ET](#), [Freaks & Geeks](#), [The Big Bang Theory](#), [Stranger Things](#), [Community](#) and many other movies and series. Celebrities such as Vin Diesel, Jason David Frank, Terry Crews, Joe Manganiello, Joe Favreau, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and many others are known for having played in the past or even nowadays keeping their playing groups.

According to **The Bodhana Group**, a not-for-profit organisation specialised in the use of TRPG for therapeutic purposes, some of the following benefits of TRPG are:

Social Skills

- Building Relationships
- Communication
- Social Anxiety
- Social Rehearsal
- Supporting a Community

Therapeutic use of tabletop role-playing games

Educational Skills

- Arithmetic
- Critical Thinking
- History
- Reading Comprehension
- Writing

Coping Skills

- Addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Grief and Loss
- Trauma

Behavioural Management

- Impulse Control
- Empathy and Compassion
- Family Dynamics
- Personal Accountability
- Resiliency

In case you are in the USA, [The Bodhana Group](#) would be the main organisation to seek for support in using TRPG in therapy sessions. In Singapore, there is the amazing job conducted by [Swords & Stationery](#), led by the talented Shaun Low. And if you are in the ACT here in Australia, [Dice 4 Diversity](#) is the best supplier of such services. If you are in Sydney, feel confident to contact [Speakable](#), with a highly talented team, which includes a TRPG writer who is not only a Game Master but also a Master in Special Education!

NEWS: Speakable is a supporter of the World Food Programme



Every year, Speakable selects a not-for-profit organisation to receive its support, so the clinic can keep its alignment to UNESCO's **Sustainable Development Goals** to make the world a better place through individual and corporate efforts. For 2021, the selected organisation is United Nations' **World Food Programme**, in the form of the inspiring initiative called [ShareTheMeal](#).

Speakable is committed to contribute to at least one meal to a child in hunger for each therapy session delivered to its clients. This way, Speakable's clients are actually contributing to this amazing initiative. The more therapy sessions are made, the more meals are delivered to children in hunger across the world.

If you want to make individual contributions to ShareTheMeal, you can simply download and use the project's mobile app:

- [Google Play](#)
- [App Store](#)

Watch the video explanation of ShareTheMeal initiative below:

[How can you change the world with just \\$0.80](#)

Tips to stimulate communication skills in preschool children



One statement usually said by speech, language and education specialists is that every child learns language the same way, but not at the same time. It is especially true when we analyse speech and language skills development in children with a neurodiverse condition. Children are preschoolers when they are between 3 and 5 years old, so their communication is mostly oral or based in hand gestures. They are expressing themselves through verbal, sign or picture (expressive language) while assimilating what is said to them (receptive language) through their daily experiences with other people.

Within this age range, some traits might draw attention to check if the child has receptive language issues involving:

- Understanding what gestures mean
- Following directions
- Answering questions
- Identifying objects and pictures
- Taking turns when talking with others

Expressive language issues might be involved with:

- Asking questions
- Naming objects
- Using gestures
- Putting words together into sentences
- Learning songs and rhymes
- Using correct pronouns, like “he” or “they”
- Knowing how to start a conversation and keep it going

Though most preschoolers don’t read yet, there are some early signs of literacy issues involving:

- Holding a book right side up
- Looking at pictures in a book and turning pages
- Telling a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end
- Naming letters and numbers
- Learning the alphabet

Tips to stimulate communication skills in preschool children

When one or more of these issues are identified in the child, there might be a chance of speech and language disorders, which should be treated as early as possible for more effective and lasting outcomes. The support of specialists such as speech and language pathologists and special needs education consultants would be of great help, but there are many simple activities that parents, carers and teachers can conduct to stimulate communication skills:

- Be patient, the child needs stimulation and not pressure
- Encouraging the child to ask you questions
- Flashcards play, showing the child flashcards for the child to describe the picture and filling with more information in case the child is too vague or plain in description
- Giving the child time to answer questions
- Help the preschool teacher, as a volunteer in the classroom or playground, so you can identify your child and other children's behaviours to point out social interaction opportunities
- Helping the child learn new words
- Listening and responding when the child talks

- Normalise conversation, speaking with no restriction and always indicating the correct way to speak, always with kindness and empathy
- Playing "Robot Helper", as if you were the child's robot and must do actions according to the child's instructions
- Point to signs in the grocery store, at school, and outside
- Pointing out words you see
- Puppet conversation, since there's a higher chance of a child engaging in a friendly conversation with a puppet than with other people
- Reading to the child every day, sometimes reading picture books with no words
- Setting limits for watching TV and using electronic media
- Speaking to the child in the language you know best
- Talking a lot to the child

With some of these activities, your child will have many opportunities to stimulate communication skills and overcome some barriers that might be hindering the child's intentions to make friends. Always remember that the support from specialists can indicate the most probable reasons for preschool communication issues, so you can contact Speakable for this procedure.

Using special interests for engagement in children



The autistic spectrum is a very dynamic condition which affects people in unique ways and in a wide range of impact over their lives. For most people within the Autism spectrum, special interest areas (SIAs) can be a dominant part of their days, sometimes acting as social barriers when they try to interact to other people. However, SIAs can be used as a very interesting way to encourage children to develop their skills and remain engaged to activities. Special interests can be literally anything, such as:

- Concrete things: trains, lifts, trucks, dinosaurs, insects, furniture, cars, coins, plants etc.
- Abstract things: movies, religion, global warmth, Algebra, accents
- Actions: cleaning, dancing, practising martial arts, debating

For a long time, SIAs have been used as rewards to be given to individuals only when they complete their tasks, which is seen as unproductive by some researchers. According to them, the effect of alienating people with autism from their special interests to reward them only after tasks has the same effect as making a person blind and only allowing the person to see if the task is completed.

Using special interests for engagement in children

Therefore, SIAs must be incorporated to education and therapy activities not as rewards, but as an extra layer of context to engage them. If the child's special interest is plants, for example, mathematic activities could be contextualised on counting seeds or fruit. Another example is by encouraging a child whose special interest is motorcycles to explain the parts of a motorcycle in a manual for Grammar classes. Among the many ways we can use SIAs to boost a child with autism into performing tasks better, we can mention:

- Identify the child's Special Interest Area, by talking to parents, teachers, therapists and other allied health professionals
- Encourage conversations about the special interest instead of demonstrating boredom
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues to better identify behaviours and feelings
- Contextualising specific tasks to be more suited to the child's SIA
- Monitor the evolution of special interests across the time – a child can become more interested in History and museums when reaching adolescence, or start interested in understanding clocks to show that the real interest is the concept of fixing mechanical equipment

When exploring the positive side of special interests in children with autism, it is scientifically proved that they perform a lot better in any task, demonstrating the use of a more complex vocabulary, higher social engagement, good focus on the task, and many other advantages.

NEWS: Speakable launches its Vietnamese Accent Reduction special program



In 2016, Speakable teamed up with Central Queensland University to create a 10-week program aimed at improving English pronunciation for Vietnamese speakers. The **Vietnamese Accent Reduction program**, or **VAR**, is well-researched and specifically tailored to the difficulties that Vietnamese speakers with English as another Language. Now, it is fully operational and ready to be provided to any person from Vietnam living in Australia or overseas, through face-to-face or online sessions.

The program is designed for the individuals who have previously participated in General English courses or have prolonged (over 5 years) experience learning English. This program aims to help customers speak English with clarity and fluency.

Being able to communicate well will create more success in personal and work life. Check our deeper view on challenges and opportunities related to accent reduction, to Vietnamese people and to any other person with a different linguistic background in the following article:

[Accent Reduction Challenges and Opportunities](#)

Check below our seven tips to help with accent reduction, from our blog:

[Seven tips to help with accent reduction](#)

Group lessons will be online via zoom in July 2021! In case you know someone interested or who would benefit with this program, do not hesitate in [contacting us!](#)

Back-to-school tips for Term 2/2021



Last year, we have already listed six great tips for parents and children to follow and ensure a comfortable and confident experience at classroom and when doing homework – you can access those useful tips by [clicking here](#). See below five more tips to help parents and children have a productive and exciting return to school activities.

- **Help children set goals for this Term and assume the responsibility for it.** Parents should make children understand how their engagement at class can help them have less to worry at home or when important exams are undertaken.

- **Implement a gradually smoother daily routine as school start gets closer.** Sometimes, excessive activities and responsibilities at home might affect the child's understanding of what is a priority when school is back. Try to remove some chores or even leisure activities to make their biological clocks get used to the new routines.
- **Organise new routines and engage children in daily decisions.** Children must feel immersed in school processes in order to cherish it instead of feeling that school is just a 'boring period' before or after the real fun moments of the day. Parents can help them understand the small decisions such as deciding for an apple or a banana to take to school for the break, or helping parents wash the uniforms by putting soap powder in the machine etc.
- **Find moments of full relaxation and other activities.** Never forget, children are children, not learning robots. They must have fun and out-of-school experiences which enrich their life. Having fun with parents, playing with siblings, cousins, friends or even online. Playing games, practicing sports, having classes of other activities of interest, reading (or writing) books, performing arts and crafts, all of those activities can maintain children's physical and mental health.

There are many more tips to help children start off their school year with less stress and more excitement. [This article from care.com has also a list 101 tips](#), use them as a complement to the ones above. Which other tips do you have to share with us?

Thank you for your time!

This was the fourth issue of our new Speakable Magazine, which compiled the articles and relevant news about communication, confidence and our clinic from 2021's school term 1.

In case you are interested in following Speakable's social media profiles and blog, please check the list below:

Speakable Blog: www.speakable.com.au/blog

Facebook Page: [@SpeakableOz](#)

Twitter Page: [@speakableoz](#)

LinkedIn Page: [@speakable-speech-language](#)

Instagram Page: [@speakable_speech_pathology](#)

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Thank you for your time!

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