

Speakable

A magazine with news and articles
about communication and confidence

Phonological awareness for preschoolers

The high importance for preschoolers to have phonological
awareness for developmental milestones and

The importance of sleeping for working memory

Scientific evidence of benefits from a good sleeping routine,
with great tips to help your child sleep better

Contents

Hello achievers,

We hope that you are well!

Halfway through the school year and our students continue to thrive with their academic performance. Speakable effectively delivers speech pathology assessments and therapy online and in person.

This year, we have been able to support our young learners' memory by utilising the TALi working memory program. New strategies from the Kwik Recall program have been added to the lessons to strengthen their ability to remember facts and details. Our partnership with Wiserkids is a success in supporting our students with numeracy.

This new issue aims to inspire parents, educators, speech pathologists and other health specialists by providing the most current speech pathology related information.

Please feel free to share your reading experience with others and together, let's support our children in the best possible way.

Binh Doan
Managing Editor and Executive Director of Speakable

Speakable Team



Managing Editor Binh Doan

Designer Henrique Santos

Speakable Team of SLPs and Teachers Binh Doan, Hansol Kim

Speakable Math Support Jennifer Hoffman

Speakable Supporting Team Rebecca Nguyen, Van Nguyen

Thank you!

Activities to develop and improve listening skills	3
Developing vocabulary in children	5
How mums can help their children's studies	6
Activities to stimulate children's memory	8
Phonological awareness for preschoolers	10
Winter-based activities for communication and fun	11
Key Word Sign as a powerful support to speech difficulties	13
Positive Affirmations for Kids	15
The importance of sleeping for working memory	16
Early warning signs of learning difficulties	18

Activities to develop and improve listening skills



Communication is a two-way process in which an individual expresses an idea, opinion or feeling, and another person acknowledges that transmitted message. Considering oral communication, one speaks, the other one listens. This means that improving communication is not only enhancing how to speak, but also how to listen. See below some ideas of how to develop and improve listening skills in your children:

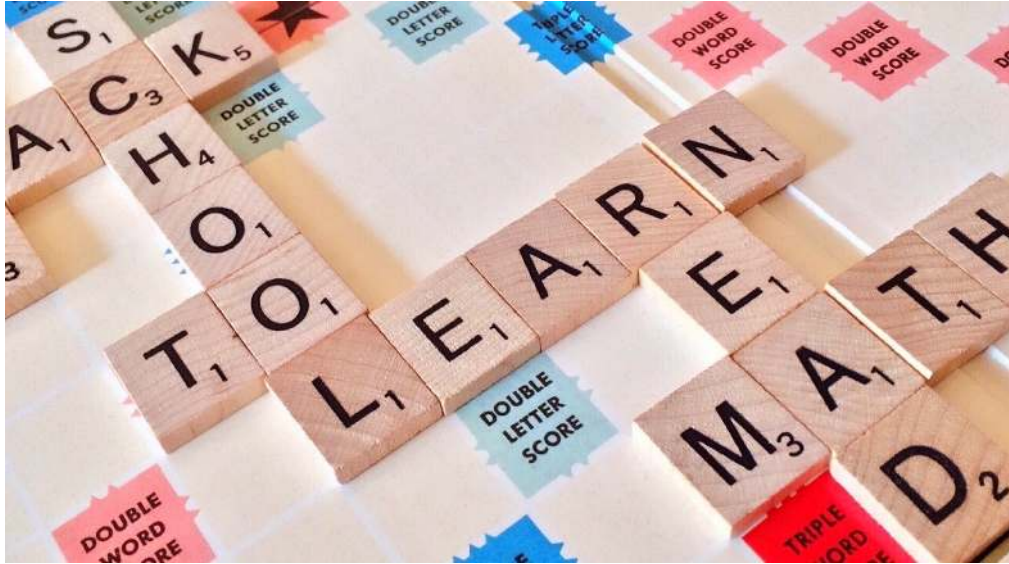
- **Simon Says.** A classic game among children, one player gives commands to the rest of the players, which they must follow. 'Put your hand on your head' or 'jump on one leg' are common examples of commands. They will only do the actions if the speaker says "Simon says" before providing the command. The players are penalised if they do the activity without hearing "Simon says." Kids will learn to truly hear what someone is saying to them if they are taught to listen for not just a command but also a specific phrase.
- **Musical Chairs.** This game is lot more fun when there are a big number of participants. It's a terrific game to play at a party or in the classroom. Everyone takes a seat in a chair, and soon music begins to play. While one of the seats is being removed, they must walk (or dance!) around it. When the music stops, everyone is required to take a seat. The last person standing is eliminated. Although it may appear to be a game of chance, children will improve their listening skills by learning to draw the link between hearing the music stop and taking action.
- **Sound Hunt.** Take your child outside and have them name all of the noises they hear. You may go to a forest, a park, or a railway station near an industrial site. It's best to go somewhere with a wide range of noises. Ask your child what they can hear without assisting them. This develops active listening; kids aren't listening for a specific sound or instruction in this exercise. They learn to pay close attention to their environment.

Activities to develop and improve listening skills

- **Listen to the Story.** Propose that your kid close their eyes and listen to you read a tale from a book without seeing the pictures, or that both of you close your eyes and listen to a story from a podcast, audiobook, or just watching a TV show with your eyes shut. In the morning, ask them to think about how he or she will illustrate the story for you.

Watch this video from [Kreative Leadership](#) with some interesting activities to stimulate listening skills [clicking here](#).

Developing vocabulary in children



Words are the cornerstone of developing language skills. Children must be gradually exposed to the realm of words. They will easily lose interest in activities. As a result, learning activities must be interesting and engaging for them. To keep children interested, a mix of interesting activities and interactive vocabulary-building strategies might be beneficial. See below some great ideas to expand children's vocabulary:

- **Building Blocks:** Building blocks might be a good place to start when teaching kids basic words. Attempt to make it as enjoyable as possible. You could, for example, put a word in a block and ask the child to gather the blocks that contain the letters to make that word. Begin with easy words, such as animal and flower names, then progressively increase the difficulty level. The children may be instructed to replicate the noises or behaviours of the animals (for example, to roar).
- **New Word a Day:** A "word of the day" board may be a fun method to teach children a new word every day. Make sure you pique their interest by playing word games with them. This strategy may be used by not just instructors, but also parents or older siblings. You can also use as a reinforcement Speakable's social profiles – we have our 'Word of the Week' every Monday.
- **Encourage Book Reading:** Books are assets that provide information and vocabulary to a child. Not only that, but reading will improve his or her cognition and aid in neuroplasticity. Reading is without a doubt one of the most beneficial hobbies one can have.
- **Word Puzzle:** This game may not be appropriate for younger children who are still learning to read. Word puzzles, on the other hand, may be performed when they've mastered a good amount of words and have a solid vocabulary. Start with simple words and work your way up to more complicated terms as the game continues.

Watch this video from [Rainbow Resource Center](#) with some great explanations of how to stimulate the acquisition of vocabulary [clicking here](#).

How mums can help their children's studies



More and more frequently, we can see families where both mother and father dedicate a significant portion of the day working for a company – be it working at an office or from home. Because of this social and cultural trend, the number of working mums has increased in an astounding pace, impacting in family relations and, consequently, how motherhood is hindered by the business world. Even with limited timeframes, mums still need to watch over their children's health, social interactions and school performance. Aiming to give some support in this last topic, we have listed below some actions mums can implement to keep their children studying and engaged at school activities:

- **Set realistic and consensual goals:** At the beginning of each school term, mum and child sit together and discuss past grades and the term's curriculum, in such a way both feel confident to set goals for grades and achievements throughout the term.
- **Plan daily routine:** Especially due to time requests from both the child's school and the mum's employer, a daily routine must be implemented in order to ensure both will use their available time in the most efficient way, avoiding idle time for both.
- **Real-life learning check:** Instead of acting as an examiner making direct questions clearly "school-born", the mum can make creative questions and challenges related to daily life to check how much the child can apply what was learnt into a real-life case. For example, if the child is learning to multiply by 3, you can casually discuss about a dessert recipe that needs five spoons of sugar per person, and you are planning to make it for the child, dad and you – then you ask the child how many spoons you would need in total for the recipe.
- **Effective study environment:** Children usually have many opportunities to get distracted and avoid studying. Thus, it's very important to remove as many distracting factors as possible, such as blocking access to TV, videogame, music and other elements – which doesn't mean to bluntly prohibit, but actually reach to this agreement together by emphasising the value of being responsible and trustworthy. However, removing distractions is not the only action here – you have to provide all the elements to improve study efficiency. It means comfortable desk and chair, lighting, school supplies for all possible needs etc.

How mums can help their children's studies

- **Be a role model:** Whenever possible, show the child how to produce content efficiently. If you work from home, you can be both at the same room: the child will be reading school books and writing homework, while you are writing some report or analysing your work papers. If you can show how to study using your own job as an opportunity, your child will very likely follow your behaviour.

By implementing one or more of these actions at home, you'll be contributing hugely to the studies and good grades of your children with a much lower level of stress. In case of any query, the Speakable team will be always ready to provide support, especially through our Parent Coaching program. The Speakable team wishes a wonderful Mother's Day to all our clients and their families!

Activities to stimulate children's memory



Among the many skills children develop for mental activities until adulthood (and never stopping the development of such skills), memory is among the most relevant ones, affecting aspects ranging from socialisation to school performance. In order to help you stimulate your children, we have listed some great and easy games that will make the memory stimulation fun among you.

- **Matching memory cards:** The most classic one comes first – the child has to memorise the cards whenever turning them and matching with another card with the same picture. You can find 15 free, printable matching memory card decks [clicking here](#).
- **What's missing?** You simply show a number of items to the child at the same time, give them a time to memorise (or you can use the time to talk about the items' characteristics such as shape, colour etc.), then you ask the child to close their eyes. When the child opens their eyes, you'll have removed one item and the child must identify which one is missing.
- **String of elements:** There are many ways to play this game. There's the one in which the first person says "I went shopping and bought a(n) [item]." The next person says "I went shopping and bought a(n) [item] and [another item]", adding a new element to the sequence. The string of elements can also explore numbers, where each participant repeats all numbers said before and adds a new one at the end.
- **Magic Cup:** Another classic one, you just put a small item under one of three cups with their bottoms up, move them around one another and the child must identify where the small item is by memorising the movement of cups, not guessing.

When playing these games with your child, you might identify special difficulty from the child to memorise. If you feel the memory difficulty is somehow concerning, maybe it's time to take the child to some health professional to be properly tested. If diagnosed with cognitive or working memory difficulties, your child can receive a treatment plan customised for your child's specific needs.

Activities to stimulate children's memory

Get in contact with Speakable in case of any question related to memory stimulation and difficulties, we have a team of professionals ready to diagnose and treat this cognitive challenge. Among our many tools, we offer Cogmed ([click here](#) to understand how it works). Also, [click here](#) for some interesting tips to enhance your working memory.

Phonological awareness for preschoolers



The transition to preschool is a significant milestone for a child's development. Due to this fact, some skills are crucial for the child to have and be able to perform as expected at preschool level. One of these skills is the phonological awareness, which is the capacity to recognise and manipulate sounds in spoken language, is the foundation for decoding, blending, and, eventually, word reading. Phonological awareness develops before formal schooling begins and continues through third grade and beyond. Here is a short list of practical activities to stimulate children's phonological awareness:

- **Finger-counting words:** Hold two hands together and speak a sentence. Put up a finger to indicate each word in the sentence as you speak it. Count the number of words in the sentence.
- **Rhyming:** Nursery rhymes are excellent for learning to repeat, recognise, and generate rhyming words.
- **Clap-counting syllables:** While saying a word, clapping or patting legs helps a child segment the word into syllables or word pieces. Begin with counting the components of a compound word like hotdog and mailman. Continue by using the children's names. Then keep going with additional words.
- **Picky puppet:** Play the picky puppet game. A basic sock puppet and some picture cards are required. Picky puppet only likes items that start with a certain sound. If the picky puppet likes tomatoes, for example, it will only allow the child to choose picture cards that begin with the /t/ sound.
- **Silly alliteration:** Create silly alliteration sentences with your kids' names and repeat them.

There are many other activities that a speech and language pathology specialist could plan and execute – contact us to know more how Speakable can help with phonological awareness or [click here](#) to access our page which explains about our services.

Winter-based activities for communication and fun



As Autumn reaches its end, children must face a colder environment which sometimes prevent them from doing some activities and games they usually like due to the temperature and other weather factors. However, it's possible to have a lot of fun while having speech and language skills stimulated. In the last years, we have provided some great ideas - read some of them below and check where to find the other ones:

Winter activities to stimulate communication

- **Speech Igloos:** An igloo is drawn in a large paper, then the children cut some rectangular pieces of paper and write words related to themes selected by the conductor (as examples, we can mention adjectives, animals, words with double 'o' etc.). Then, the 'paper blocks' are glued over the igloo. For children, it's a lot of fun to compare their igloos among one another to identify different words and learn by the difference. This great idea was created by from [Crazy Speech World](#).
- **Snowman Description:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Winter Bucket List:** [click here](#) for the complete description.

Having fun during winter

- **Indoor scavenger hunt:** You can create a 'treasure' in a box and hide it, then scatter paper hints across the house of how to find it. Then, just observe the magic happening with engaged and excited children trying to find their prize!
- **Cardboard houses:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Winter sports:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Party time:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Wii or Xbox Kinect** [click here](#) for the complete description.

Winter-based activities for communication and fun

Snowman activities for Winter

- **Snowman building instructions:** In order to stimulate sequencing and ordinal activities, this activity consists in talking about how to build a snowman, step by step. The child should be able to give a proper sequence of events. In order to make it funny, the child's steps should be noted and literally followed after all the explanation, building a snowman from those instructions. If there is a wrong sequence, there should be something wrong that would make the child laugh, but learn that a proper order should be told for a correct snowman.
- **Frosty the Snowman:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Snowman roleplay:** [click here](#) for the complete description.

Wintertime Holidays activities with speech and language

- **Practice poetry and singing out loud:** Your child will have plenty of free time to read something interesting or to listen to some engaging content. Why not recommending some poetry books and language-stimulating music? Children, especially younger ones, tend to feel surprised when noticing patterns in speech, such as rhymes and verses with the same number of syllables. Use that to stimulate their imagination, vocabulary assimilation and better understanding of grammatical rules.
- **Explore memory games:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Kitchen narrator-helper:** [click here](#) for the complete description.
- **Super StoryMaker app:** [click here](#) for the complete description.

Enjoy your time with your children and make sure every time is time for fun and learning!

Key Word Sign as a powerful support to speech difficulties



A child's development is a moment of many surprising milestones. However, some of these milestones might manifest in different moments than the expected, such as language delay. Key Word Sign is a simplified version of manual signing that is also a very efficient communication tool for language delay and similar conditions. It is based on natural gestures and body language, which make up a large part of how we interact on a daily basis. We use the signs of Auslan, the Australian deaf community's language. Both children and adults may benefit from the Key Word Sign.

The use of signs does not replace spoken words, but it does aid in language comprehension and development at any age. Key Word Sign employs a core vocabulary of carefully chosen words that include concepts and ideas. Each hand sign corresponds to a word or concept. Rather than signing every word in the communication, signs are utilised for the words that provide the most relevant information.

Key Word Sign has five principles:

- Speech and sign go hand in hand.
- If applicable, use whole grammatical sentences and emphasise the signed word orally.
- Only the keywords in your sentence should be signed.
- To enhance meaning, use facial expressions and body language.
- Teach relevant, interactive signs that allow communicators to comment, question, request, protest, and share their feelings and opinions.

The benefits from introducing Key Word Sign when communicating with your children are many, as you can see below:

- Visual information is provided with voice, which can help visual learners.
- It has a longer duration than speech, which can help communicators who require more time to comprehend information.
- Encourages an excellent language model in which we speak slowly, simply, and emphasise the most essential terms.

Key Word Sign as a powerful support to speech difficulties

- Because signals are easier to generate than words, they increase the chances of effective interactions.
- Encourages language development when speech is still developing.
- Reduces frustration by providing a means for communicators to voice their requirements.
- Hearing children's reading abilities are improved because they are more likely to recall a word learned in conjunction with a sign.
- Their brain is designed to learn math in connection with the signals they were taught, thus they have improved their math skills.
- The dexterity required to make the signs improves children's motor abilities.
- Because the music, lyrics, and signs increase memory and vocabulary, it creates stronger pathways for remembering songs.
- Because the signs are based on Auslan, the official language for the hearing impaired, they can reach a broader audience.
- Encourages you and your youngster to pay attention to each other.
- Boost your chances of having effective and good verbal relationships.
- When demands and wishes can't be conveyed verbally, it reduces frustration.
- Assist visual learners and give them more time to assimilate information (signs last longer than speech).
- If you have delayed/poor motor control or synchronisation of upper level motor abilities, it may be simpler to perform.
- Encourage fine motor skills and body awareness.

If you feel you and your child might need to use Key Word Sign to enhance your communication skills, Speakable's team has experts prepared to provide the support you need and present many other solutions related to the presented diagnosis. In case you need your child to be assessed regarding speech and language developmental skills, [contact us!](#)

Positive Affirmations for Kids



Before being independent adults, children and teenagers experience a huge number of challenges and developmental milestones, which affect them in very different ways, some of them not so pleasant for them. By comparing themselves to others, being anxious about exams or sports matches or facing a mistake, children might start having negative thoughts about themselves. In order to revert these threatening feelings, positive affirmations are crucial for children establish the proper mindset to accept failure and their own limits, not give up in face of any barrier and feel confident to take risks and overcome fears. Among the many possible positive affirmations, we can see some examples such as:

- I am enough.
- I am an amazing person.
- I forgive myself for my mistakes.
- My challenges help me grow.
- Today is going to be a great day.
- I have people who love and respect me.
- It's okay not to know everything.
- I can do better next time.
- I am proud of myself.
- Every day is a fresh start.

You can find many other positive affirmations by clicking [here](#) and [here](#). Either as a parent or carer, a teacher or a mental health professional, you have the chance of sharing many positive affirmations to children and help them overcome their potentially challenging experiences. Also, watch a reading of a great book named "*I Think, I Am*" that contextualises situations and suggests how to use positive affirmations [clicking here](#).

Importance of sleeping for working memory



Sleep, learning, and memory are all complex processes that we don't fully comprehend. Animal and human research, on the other hand, reveal that sleep amount and quality have a significant influence on learning and memory. Sleep appears to aid learning and memory in two ways, according to research. To begin with, a person who is sleep deprived is unable to focus their attention adequately and hence is unable to learn effectively. Second, sleep contributes to memory consolidation, which is necessary for learning new information.

Learning and memory are frequently defined in terms of three functions, despite the fact that the specific processes are unknown. The entrance of new information into the brain is referred to as acquisition. The procedures through which a memory becomes stable are referred to as consolidation. After knowledge has been stored, recall refers to the capacity to access it (consciously or subconsciously).

Therefore, in order to improve your children's working memory through sleep, here are some tips for them to rest well at night:

- **Establish a bedtime routine for your child:** Good sleep patterns are aided by a consistent bedtime routine that begins at the same time each night. A bath, story, and bedtime routine can help younger children feel ready for sleep. For older children, the pattern could involve a quiet conversation with you about their day, followed by some time alone resting before bedtime.
- **Relax before going to bed:** Encourage your kid to relax before going to bed. Older children may prefer to relax by reading a book, listening to soothing music, or practising relaxation breathing. If your child takes longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep, he or she may require more time to settle down before turning out the lights.

Importance of sleeping for working memory

- **Verify that your child feels safe at night:** If your child is afraid of going to bed or being alone in the dark, you may praise and reward them for their bravery. Avoiding terrifying television shows, movies, and video games can also assist. A night light might help some children who are afraid of going to bed.
- **Examine your child's bedroom for noise and light:** Examine whether your child's room is too bright or loud for him or her to sleep. Melatonin levels are suppressed and drowsiness is delayed by blue light from televisions, computer displays, phones, and tablets. On young children, bright light an hour before night can have the same impact.
- **Consume the appropriate amount of food at the appropriate time:** Verify that your kid has a substantial evening meal at a decent hour. Before night, your kid may become more attentive or uneasy if he or she is hungry or overly full. This may make it more difficult for your child to go asleep. A nutritious meal helps your child's body clock get started on the correct track in the morning.

These routines can ensure a good night of sleep for your children, helping with their working memory and many other aspects such as mood, motivation, judgment and perception of events.

Early warning signs of learning difficulties



Learning to recognise the warning signs of learning difficulties and getting children the treatment they need as soon as possible can be critical to a child's bright future. As a result, parents must be aware of the early signs of a learning disability in order to receive the appropriate assistance as soon as possible. The earlier a learning difficulty is identified, the higher a child's chances of academic and life success. From as early as pre-school, parents are encouraged to recognise the warning signs of a learning issue. For a young child, the early years of school are vital.

Between the ages of preschool and fourth grade, there are various early warning indicators that are typically connected with learning difficulties. Many young children display one or two of these behaviours; however, persistent issues with a collection of behaviours is a sign that your kid may have a learning disability:

Preschool early warning signs

- Late talking when compared to other kids
- Pronunciation difficulties
- Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right word
- Difficulty rhyming words
- Difficulty learning numbers, the alphabet, days of the week
- Very restless and easily distracted
- Difficulty interacting and communicating with peers
- Poor ability to follow directions or routines

K-4 early warning signs

- Slow learning about the connection between letters and sounds
- Confusion with basic words such as *'run', 'eat'* or *'want'*
- Consistent errors related to reading and spelling activities, such as letter reversals (*b/d*), inversions (*m/w*), transpositions (*felt/left*), or substitutions (*house/home*)

Early warning signs of learning difficulties

- Number sequence transpositions and confusion related to arithmetic signs (+, -, x, /, =)
- Slow recall of facts
- Slow learning of new skills, heavy reliance on memorisation
- Impulsiveness, lack of planning
- Unstable pencil grip
- Difficulty when learning about time
- Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents

It's always rewarding to see a child strive for and achieve communication milestones, but it's even more rewarding to assist them in overcoming obstacles ahead of time. If you suspect your kid is displaying early signs of learning difficulties, seek help as soon as possible. Speakable's staff of SLPs is available to give skill assessments and treatment plans; please do not hesitate to [get in touch with us](#) and [read this other blogpost about how to identify early signs of speech disorders](#).

Thank you!

This was the ninth issue of our new Speakable Magazine, which compiled the articles and relevant news about communication, confidence and our clinic from 2022's school term 2.

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](https://www.facebook.com/SpeakableOz)

Twitter Page: [@speakableoz](https://twitter.com/speakableoz)

LinkedIn Page: [@speakable-speech-language](https://www.linkedin.com/company/speakable-speech-language)

Instagram Page: [@speakable_speech_pathology](https://www.instagram.com/speakable_speech_pathology)

Our address: [Suite 10, L2 79-85 Oxford St, 2022 Bondi Junction](#)

Phone: [02 8021 6356](tel:0280216356)

E-mail: admin@speakable.com.au