

Communication and your 6- to 12-Year-Old

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As kids enter their school years, they become increasingly independent, spending much of their days outside the home in school and with peers. But talking with your child is still essential to bonding, so share ideas, opinions, and information.

Communicating With Your Child

Here are a few suggestions to aid communication:

- Make time to hear about the day's activities; be sure your child knows you're actively interested and listening carefully.
- Remember to talk *with* your kids, not *at* them.
- Ask questions that go beyond "yes" or "no" answers to prompt more developed conversation.
- Take advantage of time during car trips or standing in line at stores to talk with your child.
- Make time for sporting and school events, playing games, and talking about current events.
- Encourage your child to read books and stories that are slightly above his or her competency level.

Vocabulary and Communication Patterns

As kids progress in school, their comprehension and use of language will become more sophisticated. Usually, kids will understand more vocabulary words and concepts than they can express. Your child should be able to engage in narrative discourse and share ideas and opinions in clear speech.

If You Suspect a Problem

You should have ongoing communication with your child's teacher about overall language skills and progress. Kids with language comprehension and usage problems are at risk for academic difficulties.

A child who has a specific communication difficulty, such as persistent stuttering or a lisp, should be referred to the school speech-language pathologist (an expert who evaluates and treats speech and language disorders). Stay in touch with the therapist about therapy goals, language activities to practice at home, and your child's progress.

If your child's teacher suspects a language-based learning disability, comprehensive testing will be done. This can include a hearing test, psychoeducational assessment (standardized testing to evaluate your child's learning style as well as cognitive processes), and speech-language evaluation.

Typical Communication Problems

Problems in communication skills may include:



- hearing difficulties
- difficulty with attention or following directions in the classroom
- difficulty retaining information
- poor vocabulary acquisition
- difficulties with grammar and syntax
- difficulties with organization of expressive language or with narrative discourse
- difficulties with academic achievement, reading, and writing
- unclear speech
- persistent stuttering or a lisp
- voice-quality abnormalities, such as a strained, hoarse sound (may require a medical examination by an otolaryngologist — an ear, nose, and throat specialist)

Medical professionals, such as speech pathologists, therapists, and your doctor, can help your child overcome communication problems.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/communication/comm_6_to_12.html

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