

Modelling sentence structure for your child

Children who say their words in the wrong order or use the wrong tense can sound cute.... for a while, but then it begins to affect their social interactions.

Common Examples of word confusion include:

- Saying “I can have that” instead of “can I have that please”
- “Tomorrow, I went to the zoo” instead of “Yesterday, I went to the zoo”
- “I can’t know” instead of “I don’t know”
- “I putted my hat on” instead of “I put my hat on”
- “We goed to the shops” instead of “we went to the shops”.
- “Emma wants the apple” instead of “I want the apple”.

Using words in the wrong order or with the wrong tense can impact your child by:

- Making them sound younger than their age
- Making it difficult for them to accurately get their message across to others
- Lowering their self-esteem because others don’t understand them
- People misinterpreting what they are trying to say

A few simple strategies just might do the trick to help get the word order correct. Try these with your child:

- Model the use of correct sentence structure to your child in everyday conversation.

- Don't jump in - let your child finish their sentence first before correcting them.
- Narrate - as you go about your day with your little helper, talk about everything together. This provides an opportunity to model lots of great sentences to your child.
- Games - develop games that require your child to repetitively use a correct grammatical formation (e.g. when working on requesting starting with "I" you could get your child to requests parts of a game, such as a puzzle: "I want the apple please", "I want the car please").

For further support, call 1800 Kid Sense (1800 543 736) to book an appointment with one of our friendly Speech Pathologists.

Practicing pronouns

When children mix up their words, it's often cute to those who know them well, but confusing to those who don't know what they mean. Language mix-ups are part of learning, but some kids get 'stuck' with a mix-up.

Common pronoun confusions to look out for include:

- "me don't want to" instead of "I don't want to"
- "me going" instead of "I'm going"
- "me want that" instead of "I want that"
- "he's playing a game" instead of "she's playing a game"
- "him hurt himself" instead of "he hurt himself"

To help your child get their pronouns right, we recommend:

- Modelling the correct use of pronouns in spoken sentences when your child produces an error (e.g. turn "me want to do it" into "I want to do it").
- Praising your child when they use the correct pronoun (e.g. Wow, I like how you fixed up 'she' without me telling you).

- Being specific when praising your child for fixing an error up by themselves. This will show the child the exact part you are praising him for so he knows next time.
- Providing a good model for your child by using pronouns during conversation and games.
- Using pronouns when describing pictures in storybooks or making up stories (e.g. “look, she is jumping”).

Don't let a small developmental hurdle get in the way of your child developing appropriate social and communication skills. To get more information on how to help with child call to make an appointment with a Kid Sense Speech Pathologist on 1800 KIDSENSE (1800 543 736).

Getting rid of that cute lisp

Lisps (not saying the 's' sound accurately) are really cute until your child is 4 and a half years old and starting to socialise more. By then, lisps can start to impact:

- Ability to be understood
- Confidence when interacting with peers
- Sharing during group time at school
- Ability to sound out words for spelling
- Confidence in sharing their opinions

Here are some simple tips and tricks to get your child saying the “s” sound to eliminate the lisp:

- Praise your child when they correct their own speech without you needing to remind them (e.g. “Hey I liked the way you fixed up sock. First you said *thock* and then you fixed it up all by yourself and said *sock*! Well done for fixing it up without me telling you!”)
- Be specific when praising your child for fixing up their own speech. Say, “I like the way you said *sock* with a good /s/ sound at the beginning.” This will help to draw their attention to exactly what they have said and

hopefully increase their awareness in general conversation.

- Draw your child's attention to the target sound in words that they are exposed to in everyday situations/activities. For example, "Look, there is your sock. It starts with a /s/ sound. **S**ock".
- Model back what your child has said the correct way without asking them to repeat the word again. Asking them to constantly repeat themselves becomes frustrating for everyone (e.g.. Child: "A tat!" Adult: "Yes, it's a **c**at. **C**at").
- When you notice you have modelled back what the child has said the correct way, remember to do it again with the same sound or word four or five times later on the same day.

Don't leave it until school starts to act - allow time to resolve the lisp before your child starts school by calling 1800 KIDSENSE (1800 543 736) to see a Speech Pathologist today.

[Is your child ready for kindy?](#)

Wow! It felt like only yesterday that they were learning to walk and now they're off to kindy! Where did that little toddler disappear to?

What is an exciting time can also be stressful. You may find themselves asking if your child is ready for a big change into a new environment.

For some children, kindy may be the first time parents and teachers notice that their child is not able to do the same things as others.

You may notice:

- Your child doesn't seem to be able to follow instructions.
- They don't organise their belongings like other children.
- They're not as easy to understand as other kids.
- People are often asking them to repeat what they said.

- Perhaps they are finding it hard to play with the other kids.
- They have difficulties identifying and managing their feelings or the feelings of others.

If you are worried that your child is not ready for kindy, starting to work with a professional to target areas that are tricky is important. By the time kindy starts, and a teacher recommends coming to see a Speech Pathologist or Occupational Therapist, valuable months will have gone by in which therapy could have started.

Parents often tell us they had a 'feeling' something wasn't right. Trust yourself and book an assessment if you are concerned.

Call Kid Sense today on 1800 KIDSENSE (1800 543 736) and let's get the conversation started!

[Making learning letters fun](#)

Learning letter sounds is a long but vital learning journey for children. Here's what you can do to get the journey started if your child is struggling:

What can I do?

- Practise finding items that start with the same sound (e.g. Draw a "K" in the middle of the page and then find pictures or draw things around it that start with "K". You could even make these into an alphabet book).
- Talk about sounds and letters as you are reading. "Oh look, a turtle. That starts with a 't' sound! And I can see they have drawn the letter "T".
- Make up some flash cards and ask your child to tell you the sound the letter makes. You can go through a couple at a time, repeating them during the day to help your child memorise the sounds.
- Make flash cards of the letters. Choose a sound/letter and stick it in a place where your child passes regularly. Get your child to say 'hello' to the sound/letter every time they pass it to help them remember the sound.
- Play 'I Spy' getting your child to find an item that starts with a specific

sound. You could extend this to then see if they can find as many things as possible that start with that sound.

Why is it important?

- Letter sound correspondence is a foundational skill to learn reading and spelling.
- If children only memorise whole words, they will only be able to recognise words familiar to them. Once they learn to sound out, they can attempt any word, including words that are new to them.
- Consolidating this skill so it is in long term memory is needed before they can move on and become fluent readers and spellers.

Need a little extra support? We can help. Start the conversation with a Kid Sense Speech Therapist by calling 1800 Kid Sense (1800 543 736)

Moving about when reading keeps kids turning the page!

Does your child struggle to sit long enough to read their reader? Moving about when reading can keep kids turning the page. Here are a few ideas to try:

- Use physical activity between pages - try doing 10 star jumps every time you turn the page!
- Play "Simon Says" (doing just one activity between each page).
- 'Race' up the hallway or see how fast your child can do start jumps at the end of each page.
- Before you begin reading, agree upon a reward for finishing the book.
- Read while hanging on the monkey bars or while they are hanging over the back of the couch.
- Build a fort, snuggle up and read together.
- Ask your child to turn the pages - this way they can set the pace.
- Talk about the pictures as you turn each page so you can enjoy the story

instead of focusing on the reading.

- Invent funny voices for each of the characters. Turn the words into a funny tune and don't be afraid to use different sound effects to keep your child engaged.

For more ideas on how you can use moving to help your child learn, [visit our sensory pages](#).

Need more help? Call us today on 1800 KIDSENSE.

Busy Before School Makes for Settled at School

Does your child hit the ground running in the morning and bounce instead of walk into school? Giving your child a burst of physical activity before school can help take the edge off their sensory fidgets.

We're sure your child's teacher will be super grateful if you try a few of these:

- Jump on the trampoline
- Go for a bike or scooter ride (wear a backpack for good measure)
- Make an obstacle course involving animal walks (frog jumps, crab walks, bear walks) to complete the morning self-care tasks (eg. Get dressed, clean teeth, pack bag)
- Do an Obstacle course around the house to collect the school uniform and school bag contents
- Rough and tumble play - wrestling match with Mum and Dad in the mornings (with safety rules of course!)
- Do aerobics, gym work, yoga, pilates or walk the dog together
- Park further away from school than usual and walk or ride the last 10 minutes
- Park on the 'other' side of oval or school ground and race to the classroom (wearing your school bag)

- Allow 10 mins of playground time before school

For more information on how a Kid Sense Occupational Therapist can help your busy child settle for school or kindy call 1800 KIDSENSE or visit <https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/sensory-processing/sensory-diet/>

Mixing Up Words: Overcoming Kid's Language Mistakes

Sometimes all of us get our words mixed up, but we can fix it up when we make mistakes! Kids can mix up words in a sentence when they are first learning to make longer sentences to request (e.g. 'I can have that please?' instead of 'Can I have that please?'). Often it means that kids make a statement when they are really meaning to ask a question.

Being able to request (ask for) something appropriately is important in our everyday lives. Kids need to:

- ask for things they want at school or to get help from an adult
- ask others for items in play when sharing with others
- build independence by learning to ask for things they might like to buy from the shop/school canteen or borrow from the library.

How can you help reduce this word order confusion in the home/classroom? Here's some helpful tips and tricks:

- Model the *correct* sentence structure to help your child hear the correct way of asking for something using 'please'. This means that when the child says an incorrect sentence (e.g. 'I can have the apple please?'), you can restate the sentence in the correct form (e.g. "You mean... 'Can I have the apple please?").
- Use pictures or items to represent each part of the sentence and point to each picture or item as you say the word in the sentence. This helps to

show the child the order to say the words so that their question makes sense (e.g. I've finished my milk (point to cup). Can I please have some more (point to the milk bottle)?"

- Play 'shop keepers' and practise asking for items one at a time using the correct sentence structure. Remember you may need to model the *correct* sentence first so your child knows what to say.

If your child is having difficulty requesting appropriately there may be other grammatical structures they are also finding difficult. A language assessment will tell you if there are areas that can be developed that will help your child be successful when they communicate with others. For more information on how to help your child, call a Kid Sense Speech Pathologist to make an appointment on [1800 KIDSENSE \(1800 543 736\)](tel:1800543736).

NAPLAN literacy and numeracy skills using visual supports

With the NAPLAN fast approaching it can be a good time to identify and understand how well developed your child's literacy and numeracy skills are. However it can also be a stressful time for both the children and their families, especially for children whose skills are not developing easily. Irrespective of their NAPLAN scores, children need effective literacy and numeracy skills for functional life skills (using money and time) as much for academic progress (reading, spelling). To help children finding literacy and numeracy development challenging, did you know that Kid Sense literacy skilled Occupational Therapists (OT's) can help?

Here are some activities that our therapists use to develop literacy and numeracy skills:

- **Story Mapping Techniques:** At Kid Sense we use many different ways of helping children to put their imaginative ideas down on paper. This can include using a 4w (who, where, when, what) structure, mind maps, a

mountain story plan (starting with the setting and characters, adding in what happens in the story as you travel up the mountain, the main event or problem when you reach the peak of the mountain, and then the resolution and ending as you go back down the mountain). These visuals can help support a child to be able to generate their ideas, plan them into a logical sequence and get all of the information they need written down.

- **COPS editing visual:** This is a visual that we find helps children practise self-editing of their own work. This includes checking for C= capitals, O= overall does your writing make sense?, P= punctuation - have you used ?, !, ", and S= spelling.
- **'bed' letter orientation technique:** This is a visual to help identify the orientation and formation differences between 'b' and 'd'. You can also make a 'bed' by touching both knuckles together as you put your thumbs up on both hands, where the thumb on your left hand is the 'b' (start of the bed) and the thumb on your right hand is the 'd' (end of your bed).
- **'p vs q' visual:** This visual of a prince ('p') and queen ('q') helps identify the orientation and formation difference between 'p' and 'q'.
- **Long vowel alternative spelling visual table:** As we know the English language is complex, with many alternate spellings of the same sounds. This table can help children 'see' the different spellings for the same sound and the rules within which they operate, so that you can use the correct one in your words.
- **Number line:** This can help to visually 'see' and understand simple addition, subtraction and assist with skip counting in order to help this task become a more purely 'mental math' skill. You can use a whiteboard marker to physically jump and move between the numbers.
- **Number grid of 1-100:** This is a great way to assist with skip counting, so that a child can visually see and count the numbers. It can also help your child to understand any patterns.
- **Visual timers:** These can help children; give meaning to time (eg how long is 5 minutes), practise getting a task complete within in a set period of time, work under a time pressure and assist with their time management. Seeing the time slowly disappear helps them to process how long a task may take, rather than just being told they have 'half an hour' (whatever that means if you don't understand time).
- Overall, OTs have lots of different visual strategies to assist with letter formation, letter sizing ('sky, ground, water' visuals), idea generation,

spelling, story writing and numeracy concepts.

Here are some suggestions that you may find helpful to continue developing literacy development in the home environment:

- **Letter and number magnets** on the fridge so that your child can practise spelling words, sequencing numbers or even 'making' their sight words with the magnets.
- **Play word games and do crosswords** to help develop vocabulary and spelling
- **Read** with your child each day
- Get your child to **write letters or emails** to friends and family
- Get your child to **write the shopping list** for you or write in birthday cards
- Get your child to **make collages of each letter sound** (e.g. 'r' sound) of drawings, pictures from magazines or shopping catalogues, and writing words that start or include the sound r.
- Incorporate the **use of visual supports** as much as possible to assist with retaining skills as many of us retain visual more than auditory information

If you feel that your child requires further support (or *you* need more fun ideas to practice these skills at home that match your child's skill levels), you may find Kid Sense Occupational Therapy and/or Speech Pathology beneficial for your child's literacy and numeracy skills.

Remember, NAPLAN can be a stressful time for children if they are given or feel too much pressure. By providing a stress free environment and encouraging them to try their best while also developing their foundation skills at home also (in fun and creative ways) can be a way to better understand your child and their learning needs, and get the most out of the NAPLAN.

[Surviving the Christmas Pageant](#)

Surviving the Christmas Pageant: Top 10 tricks for with children with autism, sensory processing disorder or language difficulties

The Christmas Pageant is full of fun, joy and... sensory overload for even the most typical of children. For children with autism, sensory processing disorder or language difficulties it can be a nightmare. The great news is that with a little careful planning, you make the event a positive experience for all.

Preparation

- **Sensory Diet:** Ensure kids are well fed, toileted, dressed appropriately and have had LOTS of their **sensory diet** input before leaving home.
- **Watch last year's pageant** on the iPad so your child knows what to expect if they haven't been before, or even just as a reminder.
- **Choose your location well** (e.g. ideally position yourself near to a patch of grass where the child can play and run around if needed, and close to public toilets).
- Take a **photo of your child** in the clothes they are wearing as you leave for the pageant and write your mobile phone number on their arm in permanent marker.

In the moment

- **Use 'waiting' activities** (e.g. blowing bubbles, chalk drawing, iPad, activity books (eg sticker books, mazes, dot-to-dots) to kill time while waiting for the action to begin.
- Use a **visual timer** (physical timer or an iPad/iPhone App) to indicate how

long until the pageant begins and/or how long until it's over. Maybe even use a social story to outline what to expect expected in more detail.

- Take **sensory aids** such as noise reduction headphones or iPod with favourite or familiar music as 'white noise' to mask the noise around them, deep pressure clothing (e.g. Jet skins or weighted vests), oral chew toys, fidget toys or 'sensory snack' foods. Ideally allow the child to carry these on their own body in a bum bag or personal bag.
- Provide **regular small snacks and drinks** (ideally small chewy foods or hard sucking foods) for regulation help throughout the day, not just as 'food' when hungry. Make sure you take a BIG drink bottle for hydration and regulation.
- Teach the **action plan** to the child if they get lost (e.g. *stand still* and yell for mum, do not move, count to 20 then look for a 'safe' person (police, first aider, traffic marshal) and show them your parents mobile number).

After the event

- **Don't try to beat the crowds when leaving**- stay put after the event has finished and the crowd will disappear around you very quickly giving kids more space and less sensory overload.
- **Don't plan any further events that day.** Instead give the child time to 'chill out' and ensure you give them lots of extra sensory diet input to help counteract the overload experienced during the pageant.

Plan well and make the day a positive memory for all.

[Fidget Spinners: sensory fidgets or](#)

just spinning toys?

The craze of Fidget Spinners has swept through South Australian schools but are they all they are cracked up to be?

This craze begs the questions ... Are Fidget Spinners fidget toys or sensory fidgets? Sensory fidgets are typically small, silent, unobtrusive, and usually hand held items that are used to redirect a child's fidgeting to allow the child to think effectively and to remain calmly 'on task'. Children with sensory processing difficulties often do very well using such items. Conversely, fidget toy are more often novel, noisy, distracting, annoying to others and keep the child from performing the task at hand.

While fidget spinners are silent, you only have to see the children using the spinners on their forehead, nose, elbow, knee, toe, finger or even tongue to see that they are in fact a distraction. Failing that, ask any parent at school pick up or any classroom teacher and they are likely to share the same opinion.

In addition to the distraction, the fact that you can buy a fidget spinner in just about every supermarket, petrol station and airport suggests that they are not really a sensory fidget item with therapeutic intent. You Tube is well stocked with videos of 'extreme' spinners, and children are actively collecting spinners.

Sensory fidgets?I think not. A bit of fun sure. If they do work for your child that's great, but if you are looking for a sensory fidget either get creative or spend a little more time researching on therapy supply websites. Cheap and easy to find sensory fidget toys might include: paperclips, small bits of crumpled paper, tiny blobs of blue-tac, a textured rock, or one of the many stress balls available. Commercially available sensory fidgets might fidget cubes, manual spinners, or bendy smiley fidgets to name just a few. It is also worth trying a variety of fidgets as different sensory fidgets suit different children. But be sure to persist in finding the 'just right' sensory fidget for your child because true sensory fidget toys really do make a difference to a child with sensory processing difficulties.

We'd love to hear what sensory fidgets work for your child!

Speech Therapy: Making it fun and fabulous!

At Kid Sense we know that play is the foundation of children's learning so it stands to reason that [Speech Therapy](#) must be fun and creative to help teach children without them realising they are learning. Our Speech Therapists recognize the importance in gaining a child's interest quickly and completely to secure their active attention to the speech therapy learning tasks.

So what *is* the recipe for an engaging and productive speech therapy session? Well, the Kid Sense Speech Therapists believe a captivating Speech Therapy session requires at least some of the following ingredients:

- creative and innovative play that uses the children's imagination to develop games that are fun and captivating because they are led by the child
- a never ending supply of games that appeal to children of different ages with a variety of interests (which explains why our cupboards are overflowing with toys)
- adaptable and flexible activities that can meet a child's changing needs as well as their variable energy and activity levels
- use of evidence based strategies to ensure that therapy is effective and well targeted

You might wonder given the energetic nature of children, where ideal speech therapy occurs? At Kid Sense we don't believe that therapy has to happen at the table. It can happen playing on the floor, wandering around the room or during an obstacle course! In essence we believe the 'best practice' speech therapy occurs *wherever* and doing *whatever* keeps the child engaged in actively contributing to the learning process.

However, its all good and well to talk about what makes good Speech Therapy for children but what do the child's parents and teachers get from their child's Speech Therapy? At Kid Sense we believe that skilling up the child's parents

and/or teacher to understand the child's speech and language challenges can reduce the daily frustration that can accompany them, as can learning the 'how to help' tips that can be used across environments. Parent involvement during the session is encouraged (where appropriate) so parents can learn the how-to tricks first hand from the Speech Therapist to take into daily life no matter what the environment. Recommended home program activities are also provided following after each speech therapy session to reinforce skills developed in Speech Therapy in order to consolidate gains.

Being a multi-disciplinary practice with Occupational Therapy on site as well, Kid Sense Speech Therapists prefer to work holistically by incorporating (where appropriate) a child's Occupational Therapy needs as well (such as using sensory based strategies to sustain attention for those with sensory processing disorder, or using drawing tasks to simultaneously help develop fine motor needs). Our Speech Therapists recognize that knowing when to refer to other disciplines (be that Occupational Therapy, Psychology, Audiology) can directly influence the speed and sustainability of developmental progress overall.

If you are looking for more information on what makes a good [Speech Therapist](#) for children [click here](#) or our other article - [Speech Therapists: Which one is best for my child?](#)

Contact us today to make an initial enquiry or book an assessment for your child
on 1800 KID SENSE (1800 543 736)

