



Great games to help 2 & 3 year olds get ready for pre-school

Includes  
advice for  
parents  
& carers

# Why learning to talk is as important as learning to walk



Communication is the foundation for just about every other aspect of a child's development. Helping build good speech and language skills is one of the most important things you can do as a parent.

Going to pre-school marks a big step as it may be the first time your child will share a play space with other children, or be in the care of other adults.

Ready, Steady, Talk contains great communication games to play with your child to help you both prepare for this important milestone.

*This is Ollie, an Openreach engineer. Communication is important to him, which is why he is joining in with the games and activities in this pack.*  
**[www.openreachollie.co.uk](http://www.openreachollie.co.uk)**

The games are simple, fun and effective and each is designed to develop one of five core skills:

- Paying attention and listening
- Understanding what is said
- Learning new words
- Making longer sentences
- Talking socially

While some children are strong in all areas, others find some skills more difficult to grasp, so encourage a mixture of all games. If your child isn't keen on games from a particular area, they could be finding the activity difficult. Persevere by thinking of ways to make it a bit easier while using other opportunities to build the same skills.

There are many names for the place a child goes to the year before they start school. We call it **pre-school**.

**This activity book helps to develop your child's skills in preparation for starting pre-school.**

# Which animal am I?

**How to play** Choose an animal from the pictures and make its sound. ("Woof" or "Baa" etc.) Ask your child to guess which animal the sound belongs to by pointing to the right picture.



Help your child get ready for pre-school by making sure they're able to pay attention and listen. Telling the difference between sounds will enable your child to focus better on their teacher's voice. This game may seem simple but it's vital for encouraging good communication skills.



**TOO EASY?** Make two or three sounds in a row ("Woof", "Quack" and "Meow"). You could even ask your child to find the pictures in the right order.



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Cut out pictures of things that make distinctive noises e.g. car, telephone, doorbell or other animals.

# Ollie's shopping bag

## How to play

Make up a story about Ollie going shopping, or use this one. Ask your child to remember what's in Ollie's bag.

“Ollie went to the corner shop. He bought a tin of beans and put it in his bag. Then he bought some cheese and put that in his bag. Next he bought a magazine. Ollie got on the bus and went home. But, oh no, he'd left his shopping bag behind. Can you help Ollie remember what's in his bag?”



**This game will help your child to deal with more than one piece of spoken information at a time. At pre-school, the helper might say, "Wash your hands and then sit at the table" so children need to remember and act on two pieces of information. It takes time to get good at listening and holding information in your head. Playing "Ollie's Shopping Bag" is a great way to build this core skill.**



**TOO EASY?** You can increase the number of objects in Ollie's bag. You can also take turns at being the storyteller and the person who remembers. When your child is telling the story, they are still developing their memory.



**TOO HARD?** Cut out pictures of items for Ollie's shopping bag. Tell the story and show each picture as you say the name, then turn it over. If needed, use the pictures again to help your child remember. Or make up a story with only one item, then two and so on.

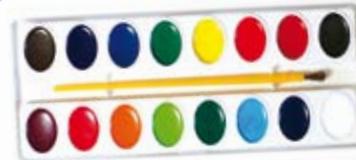


**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** You can make up a story about almost anything; for instance, a dog going for a walk and seeing different things along the way or a visit to the seaside.

# Things that go together

## How to play

Tell your child that these objects are mixed up and need sorting out. Ask them to say which things go together – which go in the sandpit, which are for making pictures and which are clothes?



**Your child will find pre-school easier if they know the names of some of the everyday objects there. This game builds vocabulary and teaches how to organise information into different categories – important for learning and language development.**



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Cut out some pictures that you can group together. For example: things you drink (milk, water) and things you wear (socks, hat), or things from the bathroom (soap, toothbrush) and things from the kitchen (bowl, glass). Sometimes a picture will fit both categories – a sponge, for instance (is it from the kitchen or the bathroom?). There are not necessarily right and wrong answers. You can talk to your child about why they think one thing or another.

Help your child develop their mental filing system by asking them to help sort their toys into two boxes. "All the cars in this box. All the shop things in that box." This also helps with the tidying up!

# All about me!

## What to do

Have fun filling in these pages together with your child. Talk about the information and include pictures and photographs. Also encourage your child to draw – whatever the result!

Look again at these pages from time to time. What's changed? For instance, does your child still have the same favourite toy?

The mini-scrapbook can help the staff at pre-school get to know your child better. Your youngster will also have something familiar to talk about with new friends.

Photo of me



My name:

Who lives in my house?

Things I like:

Special friends:



At pre-school, your child will have the chance to make lots of new friends. Being able to talk about themselves will help them to do this. You can help by making this scrapbook together. Use it to talk to your child about what makes them so special.

Drawing of my family

My pet

My pet's name:

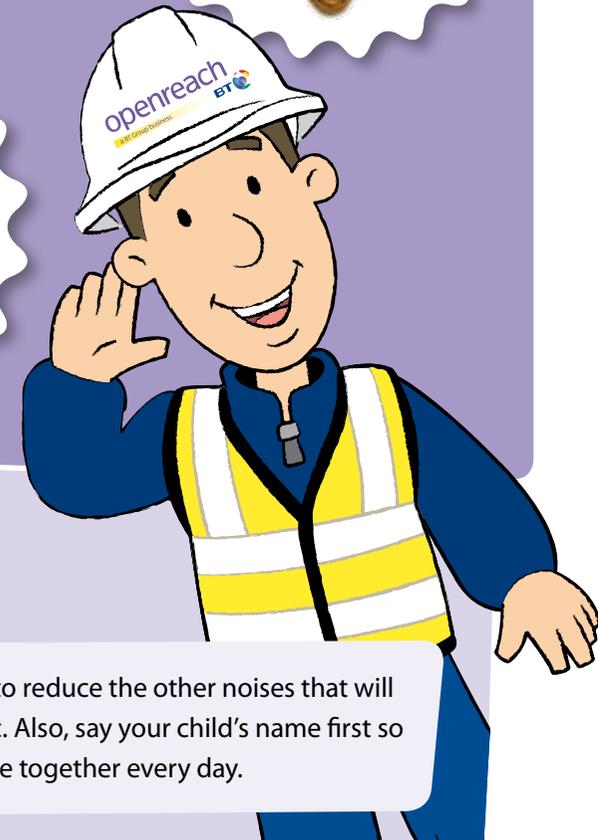
My favourite toy

My toy's name:



**SCRAPBOOKS:** A scrapbook is a brilliant way of creating a personal history. Make another one with your child: You can use photos, drawings, letters, tickets, invitations and certificates to keep memories alive. Include information about friends and family, what your child likes doing and dates of special importance. If you ever get stuck for something to talk about, just pull out the scrapbook. They'll still love it years from now.

# What do you hear?



## How to play

Ask your child to *"Be really quiet, so you can listen"*.

Together listen to the noises around you (the dog barking, the birds singing, the fridge humming, etc.) Talk with your child about what they can hear.



In pre-school, there will be many times when your child is asked to listen to some information or an instruction. Learning to listen is more than simply 'hearing sounds'. It is a skill that underpins all speech and language development. This game involves paying attention to sounds; sorting out which are important and working out what they mean.



**PLAY ANYWHERE:** Listen to sounds in different rooms, in the garden, in shops or on the street.



**TIPS FOR TALKING:** When you are talking with your child, be sure to reduce the other noises that will get in the way of them listening to you. Turn off the TV or the music. Also, say your child's name first so that they know you want them to listen. Try to have some quiet time together every day.

# Tell me a story



## How to play

Tell your child that you will help them tell

Baby Bear a story. Ask them to listen carefully so they can repeat the story to Baby Bear once you have finished. Prompt them if needed, e.g. "What happened next?" or "And then..."

For younger children, you could get some toys to 'act out' this story. This will help your child to remember what has happened.

“ It was morning time. Ollie woke up feeling very happy. He wanted to drive his new van and help people. Ollie got up and brushed his teeth. Next Ollie put his clothes on. After his breakfast, he got into his new van. He smiled happily all the way to work. ”



**There will be times in pre-school when your child will be asked to tell 'a story'.**

**This might happen as a group, or when there is an argument over a toy and the teacher wants to know what has happened. By playing this game, you will be able to demonstrate how to tell a story well, and give your child the chance to retell it.**



**REMEMBER:** Praise your child for what they do remember. It doesn't matter if they don't get it right first time. Practice will help.



**TIP:** You can use any story for this activity. Having a picture of each part of the story will help your child remember longer stories. Make up your own stories too. You can do this activity at home, out walking or while you are waiting somewhere.

# Listen and colour



**How to play** *This game is about listening, not about developing colouring skills.*

Ask your child to colour in the picture bit by bit by following instructions like: "Colour the boy's arm" or "Colour the girl's top". It doesn't matter which colour is used.

Make sure you don't give extra clues by pointing.



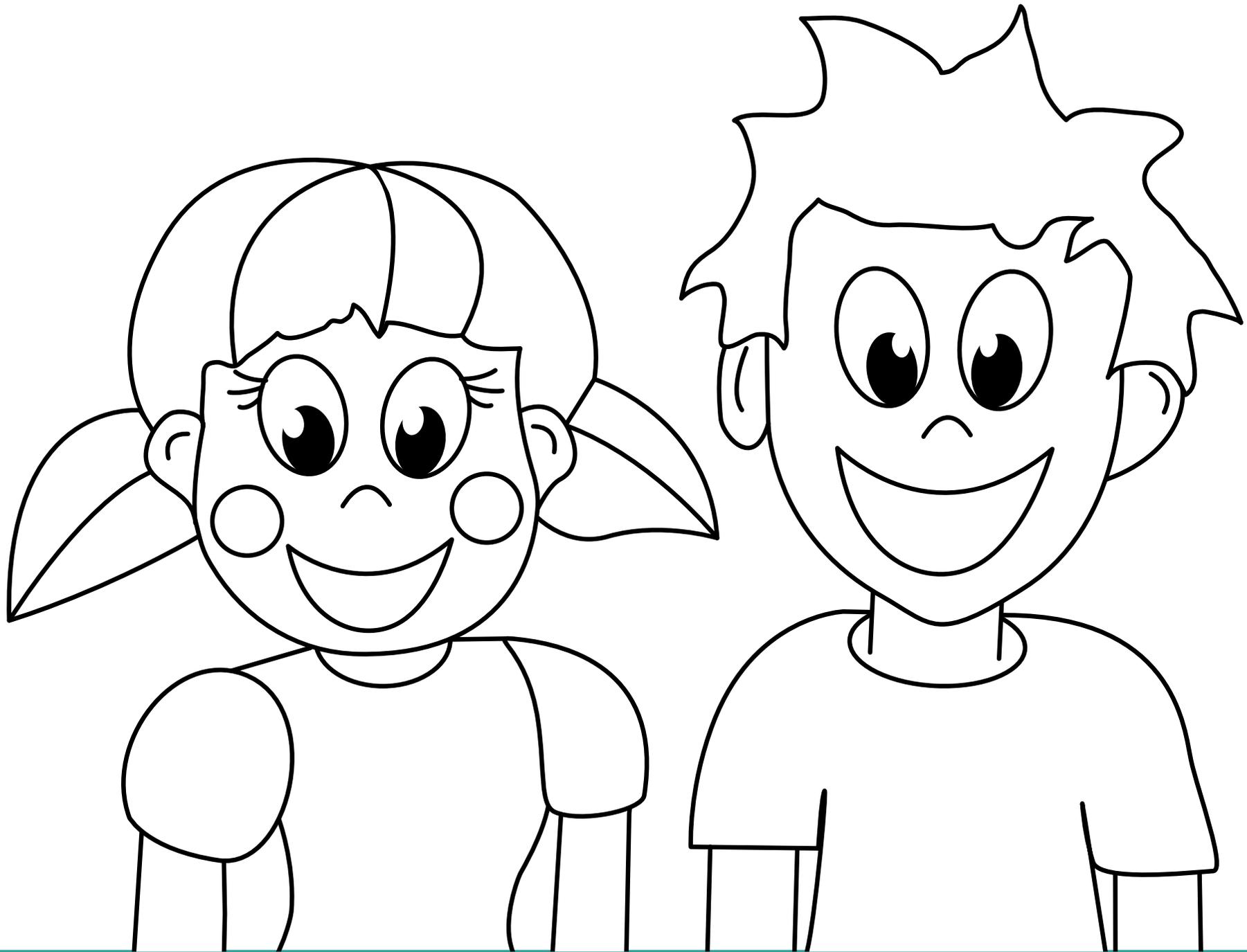
**This game teaches your child to listen and follow instructions. The better your child is at doing this, the more involved they can be at pre-school. The neatness of their colouring isn't important at this stage.**



**TOO EASY?** Give your child a challenge by asking them to colour two things. For example, "Colour the boy's shirt and eyes". If your child knows the colour names add this to your instructions. For example, "Colour the girl's eyes blue".



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Why not make your own drawings for this game? Don't worry about your drawing skills – draw what you can and tell your child what it is. Children are very forgiving! Or you can try this game with any colouring books that your children own.

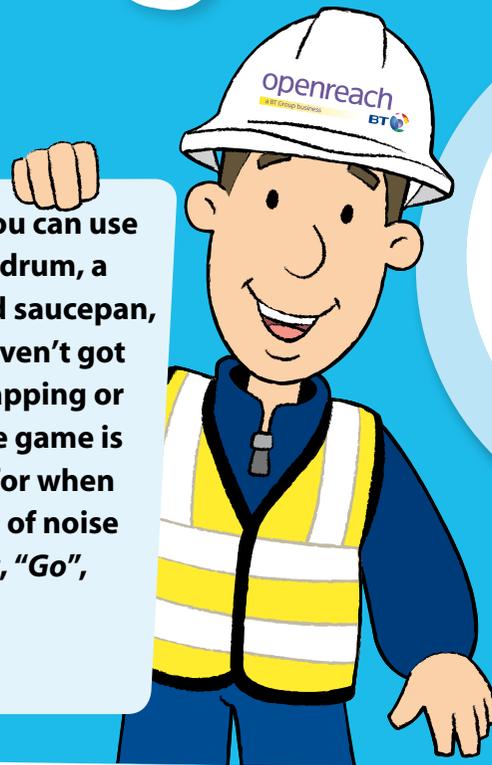


# Noisy stop and go game

## How to play

Find some items you can use to make noises – a drum, a wooden spoon and saucepan, a shaker. (If you haven't got any noisemakers, you could use clapping or stamping instead). Explain that the game is about making noise and listening for when to stop. Tell your child to make lots of noise until you say, "Stop". When you say, "Go", they can start again.

Be prepared for lots of volume!



Pre-school can be noisy compared to home. Many children find it difficult to listen to important instructions above all the noise.

This game helps develop this essential skill. Children love it because they get to make lots of noise.

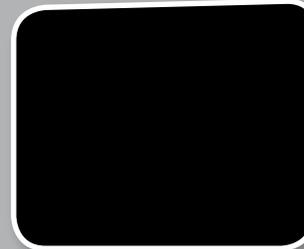
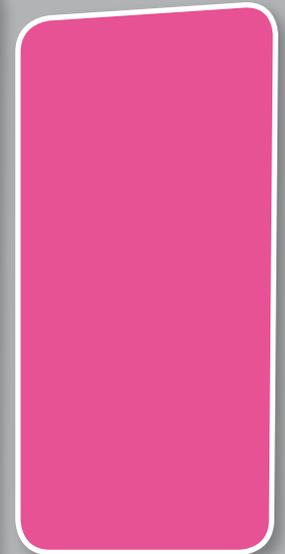
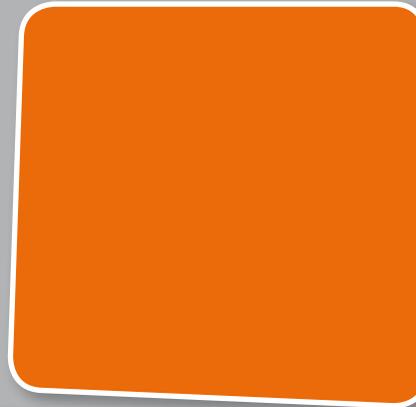
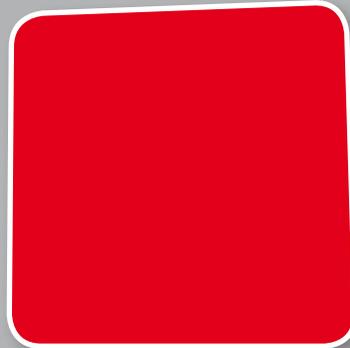


**MAKE YOUR OWN NOISEMAKER:** Take a plastic bottle, put some stones, beads or dried peas inside and seal the lid very tightly. Decorate the shaker together by drawing a picture and wrapping the paper around the bottle.

# Find the colour

## How to play

Look for things together that match the colours on this page. Name the colours but don't worry if your child doesn't know them yet. You saying the names of the colours will help your child to do the same, when they are ready.



**At pre-school, your child will probably be learning colour names. Before they can do this, they will need to be able to match things of the same colour. This game involves plenty of movement and will definitely help with this early skill.**



**TIP:** If your child is learning a new colour name, let them put items of that colour on a table or tray over a few days. All the family can join in!

# Songs

## Row row row your boat

*Sit opposite each other and hold each other's hands. Move forwards and backwards as if rowing on a boat.*

**Row row row your boat  
Gently down the stream  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily  
Life is but a dream**

**Row row row your boat  
Gently down the stream  
If you see a crocodile  
Don't forget to scream (aaaah)**



## Heads, shoulders, knees and toes

**Heads, shoulders, knees and toes...  
...knees and toes**

**Heads, shoulders, knees and toes...  
...knees and toes...**

**And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.  
Heads, shoulders, knees and toes...  
...knees and toes**

*Repeat the verse. Each time, miss off one more part of the body and just point instead of saying the word i.e.*

*Heads, shoulders, knees and (point)...  
...knees and (point)*

*Heads, shoulders, knees and (point)...  
...knees and (point)...*

*And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.  
Heads, shoulders, knees and (point)...  
...knees and (point)*

*Heads, shoulders, (point) and (point)...  
...(point) and (point)*

*Heads, shoulders, (point) and (point)...  
...(point) and (point)...*

*And eyes and ears and mouth and nose.  
Heads, shoulders, (point) and (point)...  
...(point) and (point) etc.*



**There will be lots of songs to sing at pre-school. Singing teaches your child very important skills that they will need later on in their learning. It encourages listening and is a way of learning new vocabulary and involves skills that will help when learning to read. Get a head start by singing these songs with your child.**

## Incy wincy spider

*Make movements with your fingers as if they were a spider.*

**Incy wincy spider  
Climbing up the spout  
Down came the rain  
And washed the spider out  
Out came the sunshine  
And dried up all the rain  
Incy wincy spider  
Climbed up the spout again**



## Ring a ring o' roses

**Ring a ring o' roses  
A pocket full of posies  
A-tishoo, a-tishoo  
We all fall down**  
*(crouch or fall down to the ground)*

*(stay on the ground and sing...)*  
**Ashes in the water  
Ashes in the sea  
We all jump up  
With a 1, 2, 3**  
*(leap up from the ground)*



## Wind the bobbin up

*Move hands one over the other in a circular motion and then do as it says in the song.*

**Wind the bobbin up  
Wind the bobbin up  
Pull, pull  
Clap, clap, clap**

**Wind it back again  
Wind it back again  
Pull, pull  
Clap, clap, clap**

**Point to the ceiling  
Point to the floor  
Point to the window  
Point to the door**

**Put your hands together  
One, two, three  
Put your hands  
Upon your knee**



**TIP:** Singing can be done almost anywhere. It is a great way of filling time – in the car, out for a walk or waiting for an appointment. The songs that you sing can be varied according to the time and place. Action songs need more space and quiet songs can be used to help get your child ready for going to sleep.

# Phone talk

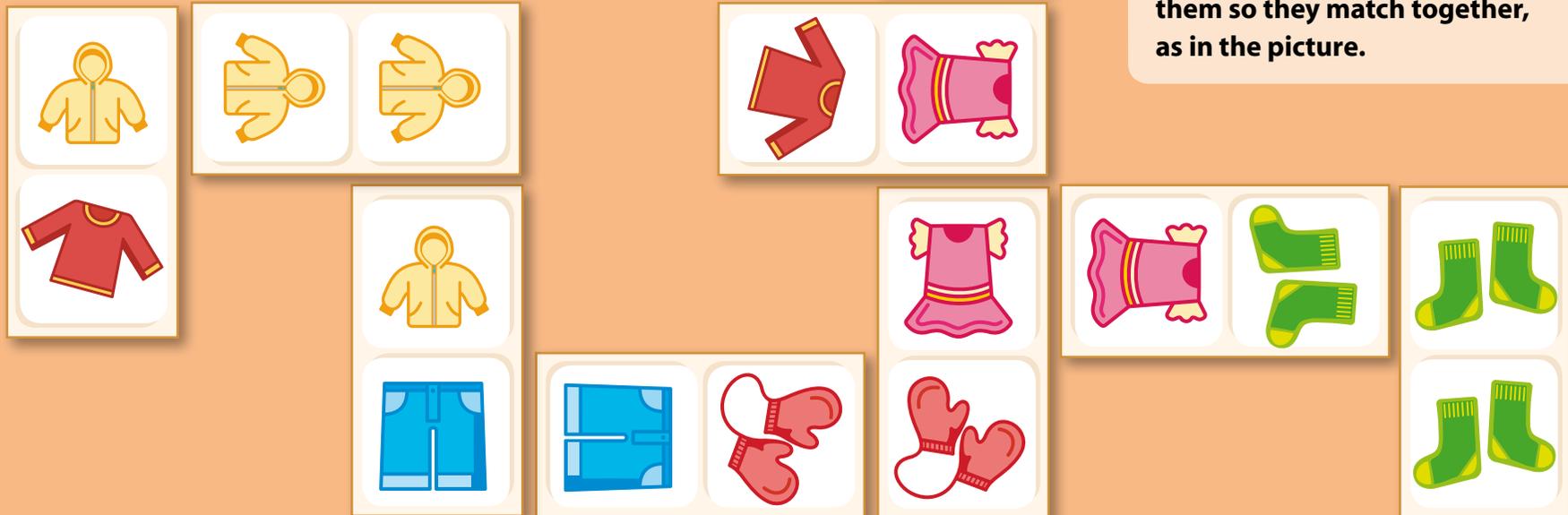
## How to play

Choose a simple activity to do with your child. (Having breakfast, getting dressed, getting ready to go out.) Take turns at pretending to talk on the phone about what you did, e.g. *"We were having breakfast"*. Then pick out two or three interesting points, e.g. *"We had jam on toast – Alfie spread the jam"*. Keep your sentences simple. This will help show your child how to do it.



At pre-school, your child will be asked to talk about something that the teacher doesn't know about – a birthday party, what they will paint in a picture or a holiday they went on. In this game, you can demonstrate how to do it and help your child practice reporting information.

# Clothing dominoes



## How to play

The domino pieces from the middle of the book show different items of clothing. Cut them out and share them between you. Then take turns at placing them so they match together, as in the picture.



**Games that involve matching are a regular pre-school activity. Give your child a head start by playing this game and help them learn the names of familiar items too.**



**TIP:** As you place each domino, talk about what you can see and about what each player is looking for when it's their turn. This stimulates conversation and helps your child. You can also make your own sets, using different themes. Keep them handy, so you always have something to do while you're waiting.

# What's funny?

## How to play

Look at the pictures with your child and talk about what makes them funny. For example, "Look, someone's going to eat a jumper!" Encourage your child to join in. Say something like "Look at that one! What's happening?"



In pre-school, children will be encouraged to speak in longer sentences and share information with each other. Children can have lots of fun talking about silly things, so humour is a great way of developing longer sentences. Talk about these funny pictures and help prepare your child for pre-school.



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Cut out pictures from magazines and have fun sticking them together in funny ways, like adding an elephant's trunk to a man's head. Talk about it while you're doing this. Then show other people and ask your child to say what's funny.

# The name game

## How to play

Cut out the pictures from the cut-out section in the middle of the book. Then turn the pictures over. Choose a picture and say what it is without showing it to your child. Ask them to point to the same picture on this page.

If your child is right, they "win" the picture. If not, put the picture face down again.



There will be lots of new words used in pre-school. Helping your child learn them in advance will help them settle in better. This fun game encourages your child to listen for what to find next.



### PLAY THIS GAME A DIFFERENT WAY:

Ask your child to respond in different ways; point to the picture, put a counter on it, or jump a toy frog onto it.



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Choose pairs of pictures (from a magazine or the internet) to make your own version of this game. Give one set to your child and turn over the other set. Play the game as above.

# Katie jump!

## How to play

Play this game with two or more children. Ask the children to do things only after their name is called out first – “Luke clap” or “Katie jump.” Check with the children – “Did I say your name?”, “Listen for your name”, etc.

Wave



Smile



Clap



Jump



**In bigger groups, children need to listen out for instructions that involve them. The pre-school teacher might say, “Gina, go and get an apron”, or “Billy, tidy up the cups”. Learning to listen and knowing that an instruction relates to them is a key skill for pre-school.**



**OTHER IDEAS:** You could use pictures instead. Say the child’s name and hold up a picture of an action. Make sure it is an action that most of the children can do. Sometimes, just hold up the picture and see whether the children remember not to do the action! For older children, this game could be turned into “Simon says...”, but this is best for children aged 7 and above.

# Where's the...



## How to play

Ask your child to find things that are hidden in this picture. Help by giving clues that build your child's understanding of "position" words. *"It's near the flower pot,"* or *"It's at the top of the picture."*

Or use clues to identify an object by its use. *"Find something you can draw with,"* or *"Find something you can drive."*



Your child might hear lots of instructions from their pre-school teacher. *"Find somewhere to hang your coat"* or *"Look for the brushes, they're with the paint"*. Understanding words and sentences is vital. Your child's ability to communicate depends on them understanding what other people are saying. This fun game gets your child to search for things.



**TOO EASY?** Ask your child to find two or even three things at a time.



**PLAY ANYWHERE:** Get your child to find things in the room that you're in. Active children could run or jump to the item, or, if the item is in a picture, they could make a small toy jump to it.



# Shopping game

## How to play

Give your child a cloth bag, box or basket and tell them it's a shopping bag. Choose some items to put in a pretend shop and talk to your child about what they are. Ask your child to go shopping for you and get one or two items e.g. "An apple and a carrot".



**This fun game will help your child listen, understand and do what somebody asks. These skills are vital for the pre-school day.**



**TOO EASY?** You can help develop your child's memory for words by asking them to "buy" more items – 3 or 4 is probably the maximum for a young child. This activity can also be made harder if the "shop" is further away – perhaps on the other side of the room.



**TOO HARD?** Help your child by pointing to a picture of the item when giving the instruction.



**TIP:** If playing with more than one child, say the child's name first before giving the instruction. This helps the child know that you are talking to them so they can be ready to listen.

# Games with sounds – things that rhyme



cat



moon



house



hat

## How to play

Explain that rhyming is when two words sound nearly the same, like “cat” and “hat” or “dog” and “log”. Say the words on this page to your child. Help them to point to words that rhyme. Ask “Do these rhyme – spoon/boat?”, “Do these rhyme – mouse/house?”



spoon



coat



mouse



boat



**Pre-school is a lot about getting ready for school. School will involve learning to read and write. This game starts this journey by helping your child to learn about sounds in words.**



**TIP:** Singing with your child helps teach them about rhymes. Point out the rhyming words in the song or leave off the last word e.g. “Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great...” When your child puts in the missing word, you can say “That rhymes – wall and fall, they rhyme”.

Some children may not be ready for this game yet, so don’t force it, but return to the game when they are a bit older. Once your child understands rhyming, you can have fun on journeys making-up words that rhyme with each other – even made-up words work, e.g. donkey, stonkey.

# Learning to take turns



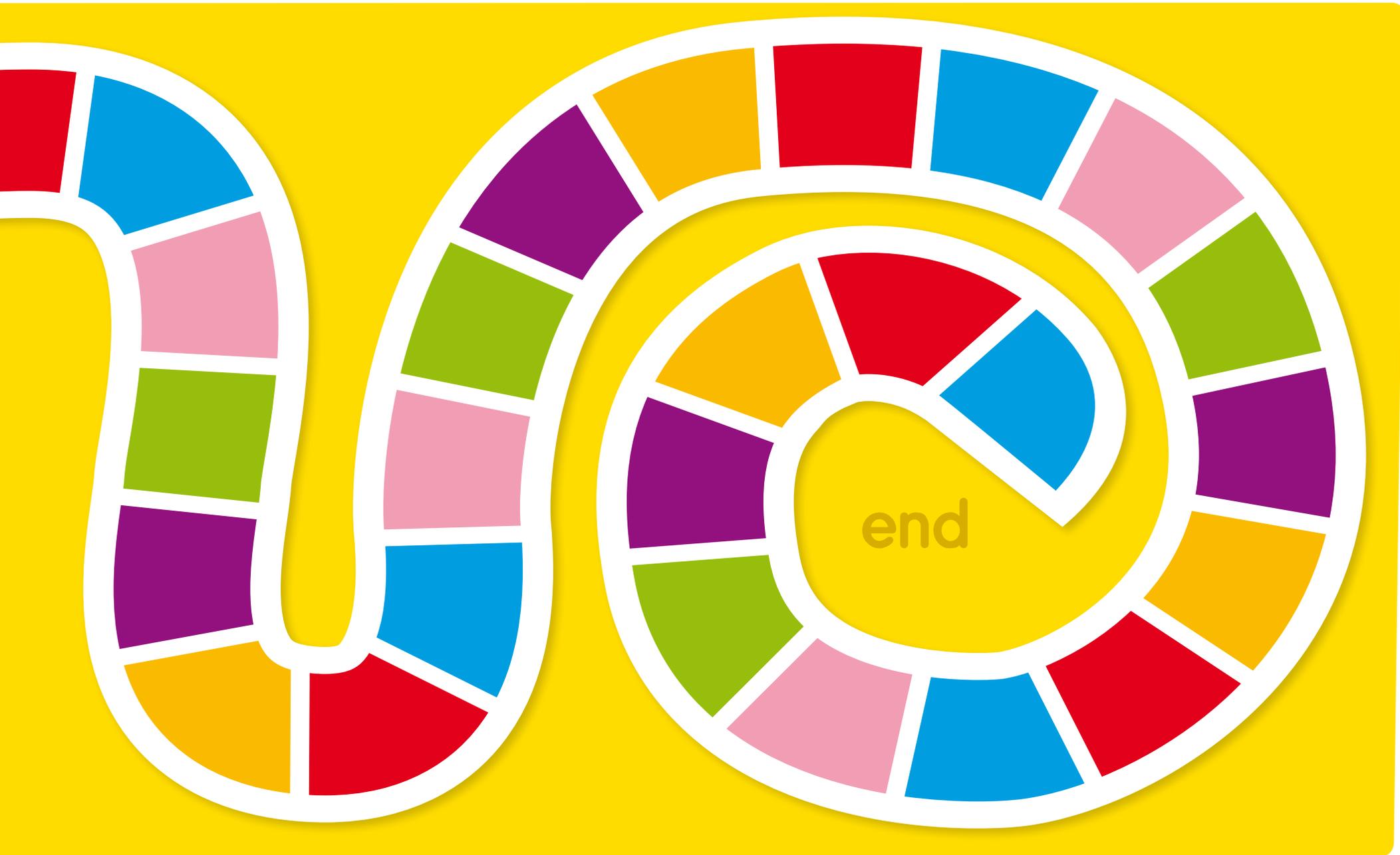
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## How to play

A mixed group of two to four children and adults is best (to keep waiting time short). You will need the spinner and counters from the cut-out section of this book. Each player spins, notes the colour, and moves their counter to the next space with the same colour. The first person to reach the end wins. Each player must wait for their turn. If they know their colours, let them guess which colour might be next, to maintain interest.

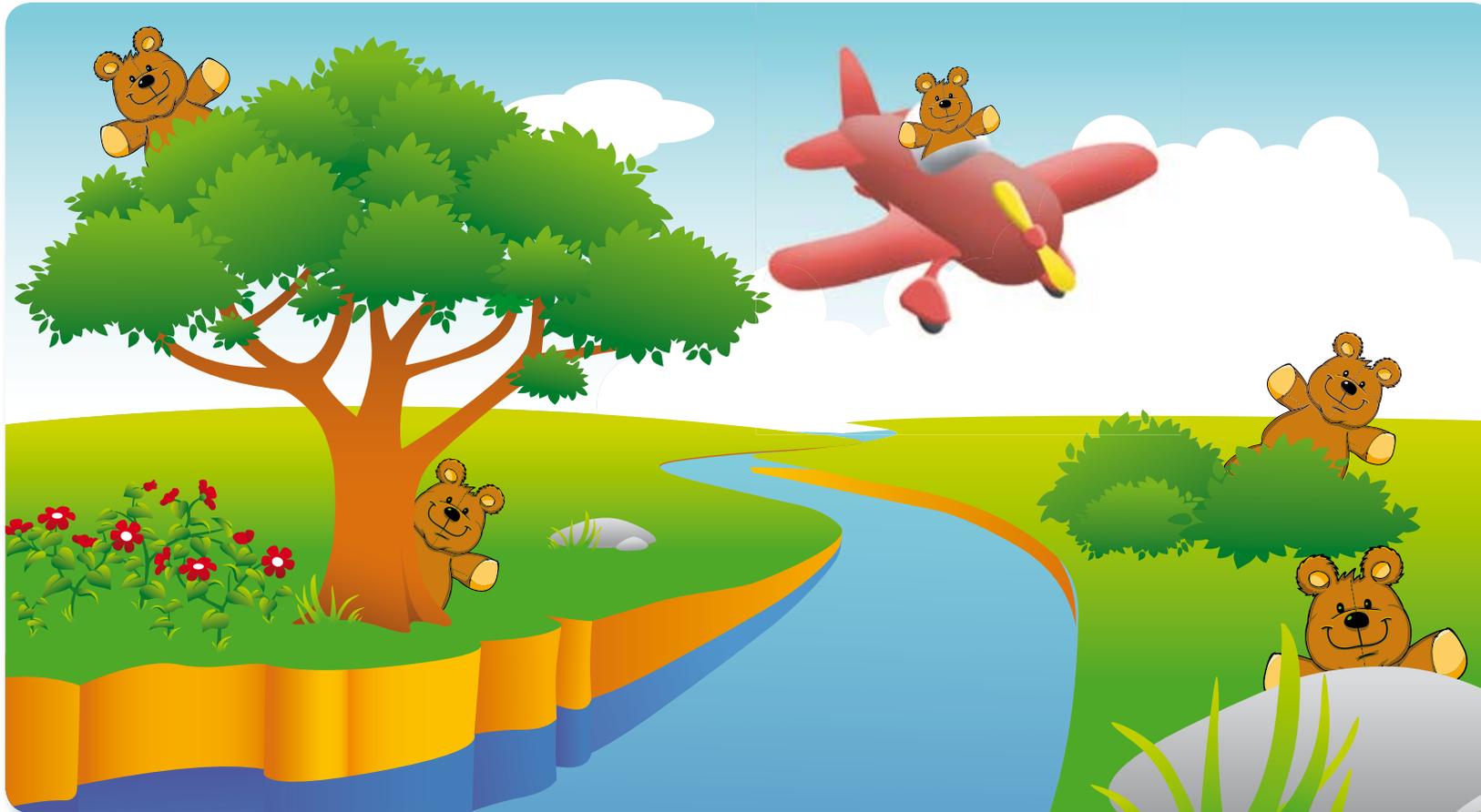


Your child's first experience of being asked to take turns might be at pre-school. Learning this is a really important part of communicating – when to talk and when to listen. This game is a brilliant way of introducing young children to the idea of taking turns.



**TIP:** Use any board game to practice taking turns or even draw your own. Games like snakes and ladders, pop-up pirates or buckaroo work well. Activities like taking turns putting bricks on a tower to see how tall you can make it is another fun way. Remember: If dice and numbers are involved, be sure to help with the counting. Winning in these games is not important.

# Looking for bears



## How to play

Tell your child that you are looking for bears. Let them know that you need to tell someone else where they are hiding. Ask your child to tell you the hiding places, instead of just pointing to the bears. Help by saying, "Look, the bear's in the tree".



This game encourages children to give more information and build longer sentences in order to describe where the bears are hiding. The game also helps your child to learn about position words. The first position words are "in", "on" and "under". It will take your child a little longer to learn words like "in front of", "behind" or "next to".



**MAKE YOUR OWN VERSION:** Close your eyes and ask your child to hide one of their toys somewhere in the room. Open your eyes and ask them to describe where the toy is, without pointing.

# What's different?



## How to play

You'll need four or more people. All players sit in a circle.

One person leaves the room or closes their eyes. Another player alters their own appearance, e.g. stands up or takes their shoes off. The returning player must then spot the difference.

When your child plays this game for the first time, it's important to make the differences very obvious – put on a raincoat, a mask or a wig. When it's your child's turn to be different, let them have fun dressing up in things like old scarves or grown-up's shoes.

Once your child has played a few times (or if you are playing with older children), you can make the differences less obvious – like taking off your shoes or swapping seats.



Going to pre-school can be a big change and your child will be part of a larger group of children, maybe for the first time. They need to become aware of others; to pay attention to what other children are doing and saying. This game will help your child practice these very important skills, while having a wonderful time with you.



### WHAT IF THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PEOPLE TO PLAY?

Simply replace people with soft toys and teddies. When your child leaves the room, alter something about the appearance or position of one of the toys.

# Beginning with sounds

## How to play

Tell this story to your child. Stress the “m” sound and ask your child to say “mmmmm” when they hear a “m” sound. Practice at the beginning – just say “mmm” and wait for the “mmm” back.

If your child needs an extra clue, rub your tummy when you say “m” sounds. This will help your child focus on the sound they should be listening for.



## “Munching Monsters

There were four Munching Monsters. Their names were Mike, Milly, Mary and Martin. Between them, they had many munching friends.

All the monsters loved munching. They munched on a Monday and every morning and for every mealtime. Their favourite foods to munch are marzipan, margarine were mashed potato.

All mixed up together – yuk!”



**Learning about sounds in words is an activity that begins the journey towards reading and writing. This game will also help your child to become a better talker.**



**TIP:** You can play this game with any sound. Longer sounds like “s”, “f” and “m” are best because you can make them more obvious when you are talking.



### OTHER IDEAS:

- Tell a story about a “sizzling sausage” or a “funny farmer” while you are travelling or waiting somewhere.
- Stick pictures of things that begin with the same sound on a page. Write a word beginning with the same letter underneath e.g. “a cute carrot” or “a wet wellie”.

# What will you do today?

## How to play

Cut out the pictures from the middle section of this book. Talk together about what has to be done in the evening before going to bed. Together, arrange the pictures in order from left to right or top to bottom. Put the finished timetable somewhere easy for your child to see.



eat



get dressed  
for bed



sleep



First experiences of pre-school can be confusing. There are so many things to do, it's difficult to know what's coming next! It helps your child to know when things will happen. They'll feel more secure and in control of their world. Use pictures to illustrate sequences of activities – “visual timetables”. They'll also help develop your child's vocabulary and make life easier for you.



**MAKE YOUR OWN VISUAL TIMETABLES:** You can create visual timetables for many tasks and routines: You can make timetables for 'Getting dressed' or for different activities on different days.

ready  
steady  
talk!

Moving to pre-school is a big change for any child and if they don't find talking easy, this can present difficulties. Even little chatterboxes will need to learn how to interact in a larger group where there is more noise and distraction.

The pages of games and activities in **Ready, Steady, Talk** prepare your child for this change by developing five core skills:

- **Paying attention and listening**
- **Understanding what is said**
- **Learning new words**
- **Making longer sentences**
- **Talking socially**

Written by I CAN's Speech and Language Specialists, **Ready, Steady, Talk** comes highly recommended by Early Years Professionals. The pack also includes an information leaflet for parents and carers.

Enjoy the fantastic, fun-filled pages together and help give your child the very best start in life.



This pre-school activity pack has been created by I CAN with the support of Openreach.

**Openreach** looks after the wires that connect homes and businesses to the local telephone exchange – where the Communication Providers' national networks take over.

Openreach is passionate about I CAN's work, and recognises how critical good communication skills are to every young child as they start school. Supporting the production of this activity pack is just one of the many ways I CAN and Openreach are working together.

**I CAN** is the children's communication charity. I CAN works to support the development of speech, language and communication skills in all children with a special focus on those who find this hard; children with speech, language and communication needs.



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