

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Service Down syndrome

Developing Literacy Skills



- Many children develop language through reading.
- Early intervention is key; the best readers are taught from an early age.
- Early writing and sentence construction are linked with reading.
- Comprehension/understanding can be tested through reading.



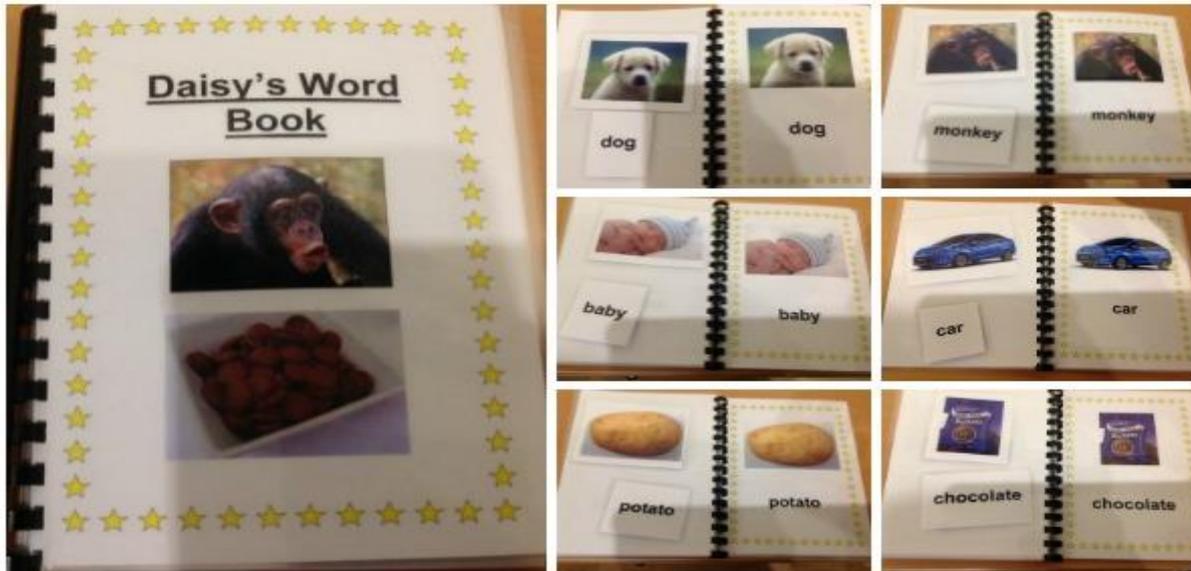
Language

- Children with Down syndrome have difficulty learning language from listening alone; they find it easier to **learn visually** i.e. from pictures and the written word



- Reading to your child and teaching them to read may be the most effective way to develop speech and language skills.
- Research shows that teaching reading has a significant effect on the development of language and ability to recall information e.g. A child is using their working memory as they recall the steps of a recipe while making a favourite snack.

- Language can be taught with the aid of signs and written materials, even to children who are not able to remember the words or read independently.



Top Tips for Language Development

- Use visual supports- objects, signing, written words, pictures or photographs.
- Reading books together is a very powerful way to teach new vocabulary and sentences.
- Children enjoy repetitive reading of favourite stories.
- Talk about the people and the activities in the book.
- Extend language when modelling sentences e.g. If child says “want toast” adult should model by saying “I want toast.”
- Make word books of known words to reinforce vocabulary.
- Seek advice from Speech and language therapist.

Reading

- For most children with Down syndrome, reading is a strength.
- Print makes language visual and enables them to learn to read and develop their speech and language skills.
- As **visual learners**, children with Down syndrome make considerable progress reading whole words.
- Phonics may be challenging and some children often rely on visual memory to read words.

Match, Select, Name Approach to Reading

The match, select, name approach is effective because it is a **highly visual approach** to reading. Children with Down syndrome may be taught pre-reading skills such as matching from an early age.

Step one

Adult says/signs the picture and the child **matches** it to the corresponding picture on the grid.

Step Two

A small number of pictures are placed on the table and the child is asked to **select** one e.g. 'Give me the **cow**'.

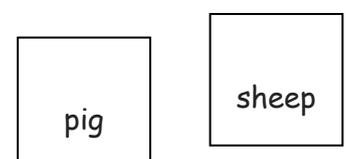
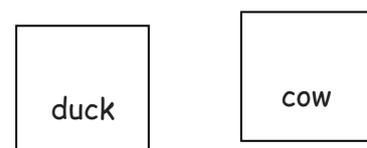
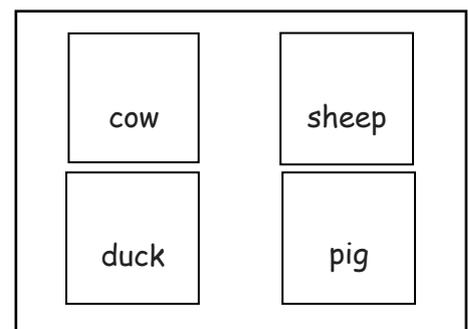
Step Three

The child holds the flashcards and then **names** each picture one by one as they hand them to the adult.

Once your child becomes confident at doing this with pictures, you can begin using the Match, Select, Name approach with some key familiar words.



Start with matching photographs/pictures and then move to matching words.



Top Tips for Beginning to Read

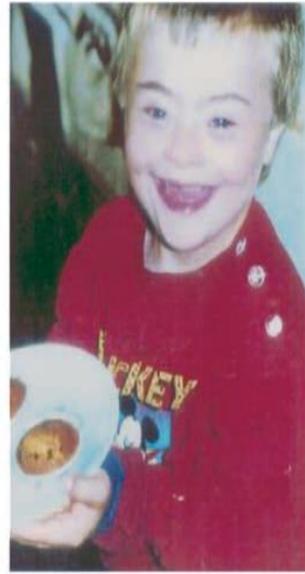
- Start with a small number of words (4)
- Use family names or words of high interest as first words
- Sessions should be in regular short bursts (5-10mins)
- An app is available to support this programme- *Special words*

First books

Make individual home-made books using photographs based on your child's interests and experiences. *Special stories* and *Book creator* are easy to use apps for creating books digitally.



I like baby

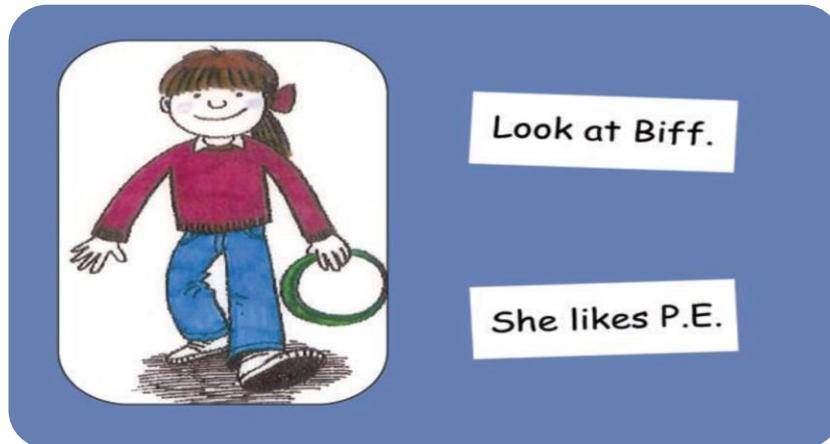


I like cakes

Use reading/library books alongside homemade books. Stories should reflect real life experiences **familiar** to the child as much as possible.



It can be helpful to make activities to simplify a story or reinforce words and characters in the book.

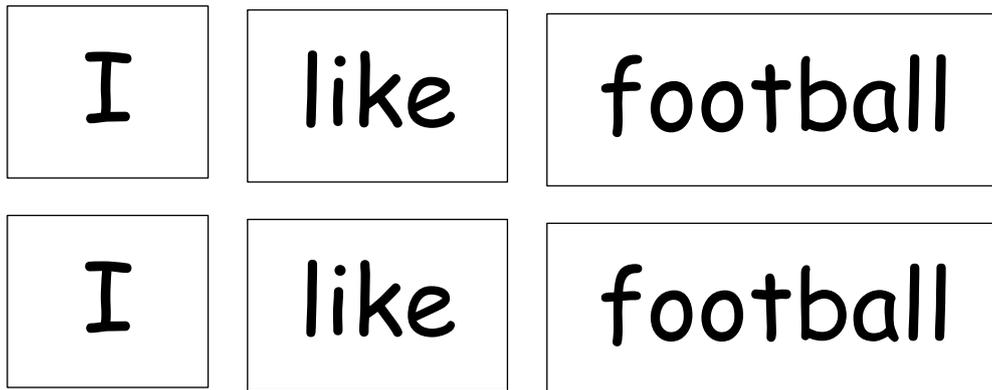


Top Tips for Reading Development

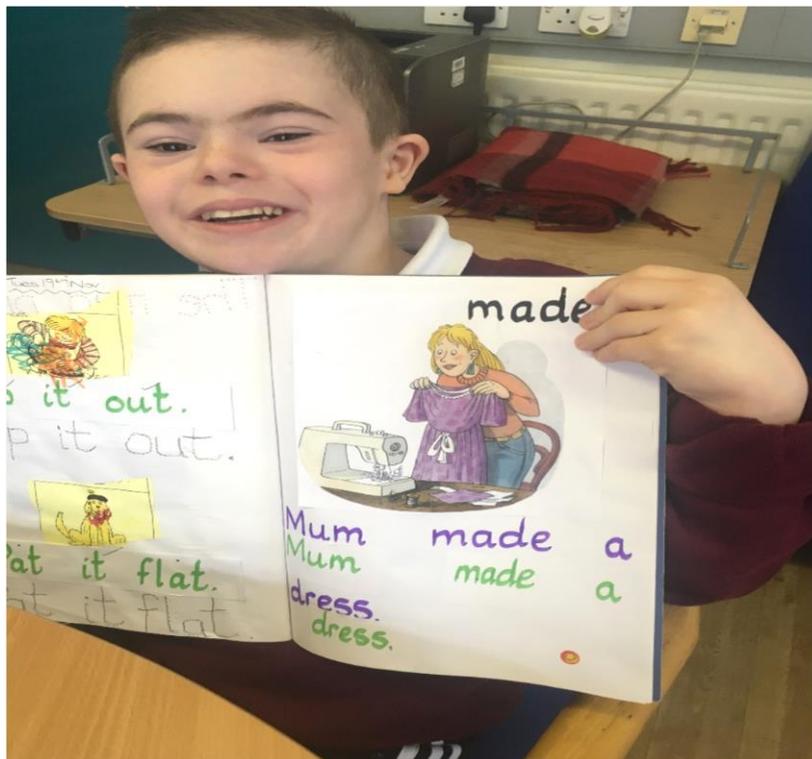
- Encourage pointing to the pictures as you talk about them.
- Follow your child's lead – let them point and show their interest.
- Read to your child regularly, commenting on the pictures and story.
- Label items at home and point to the word when naming the item e.g. door, table etc.
- Provide varied reading experiences e.g. online books, personalised books, word games, reading labels when out shopping.
- Ensure books are readily available and capture your child's interests.
- Shared reading experiences with siblings/family members will aid in development of reading skills.

Writing

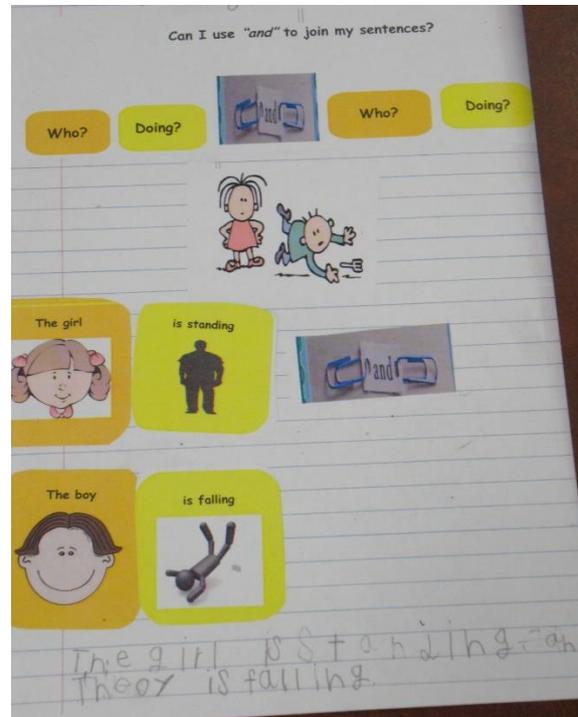
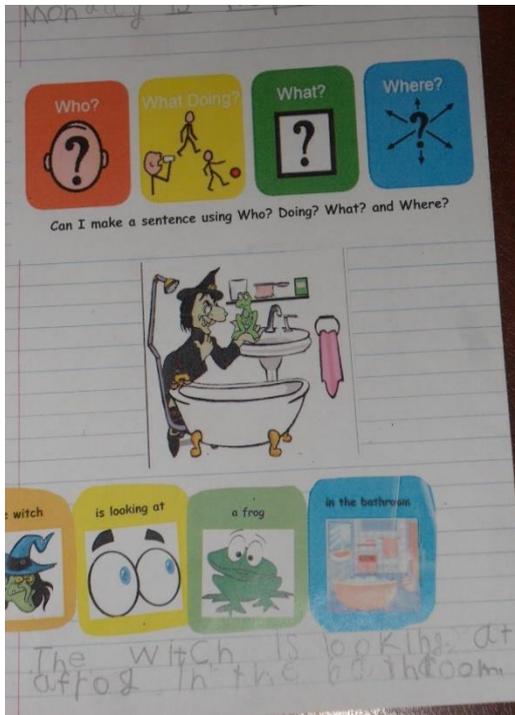
Start to link reading with early writing skills and sentence construction. Begin by **modelling** sentences for your child to copy underneath either matching with flashcards or writing.



Ask your child to sequence a sentence using words they know by **copying** a phrase from one of their books.



Promote more independence in sentence building by using **visual support** activities.

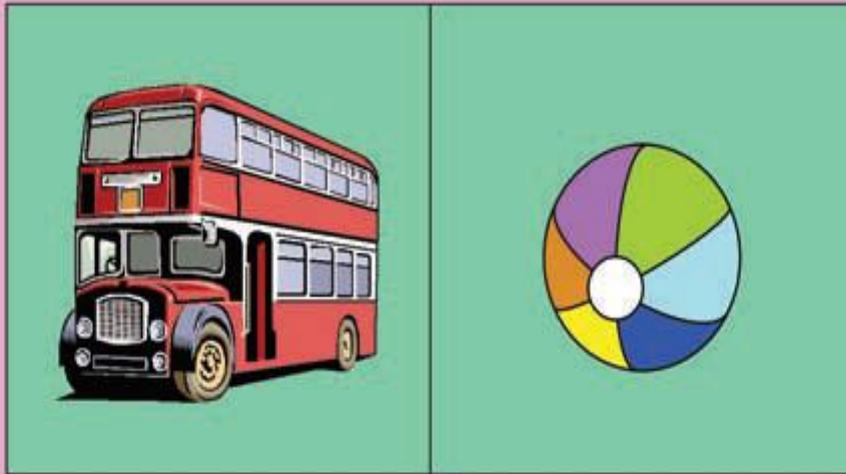


Top Tips for Writing

- Use visuals to aid in construction of sentences.
- Copy and match sentences from reading books.
- Use colourful pictures/sentence building activities/missing words to aid in sentence construction.

Understanding

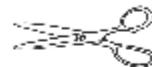
Your child may be able to read but may not fully understand what they are reading. You can help your child with their understanding by asking them to **match** words or simple phrases to the appropriate picture.



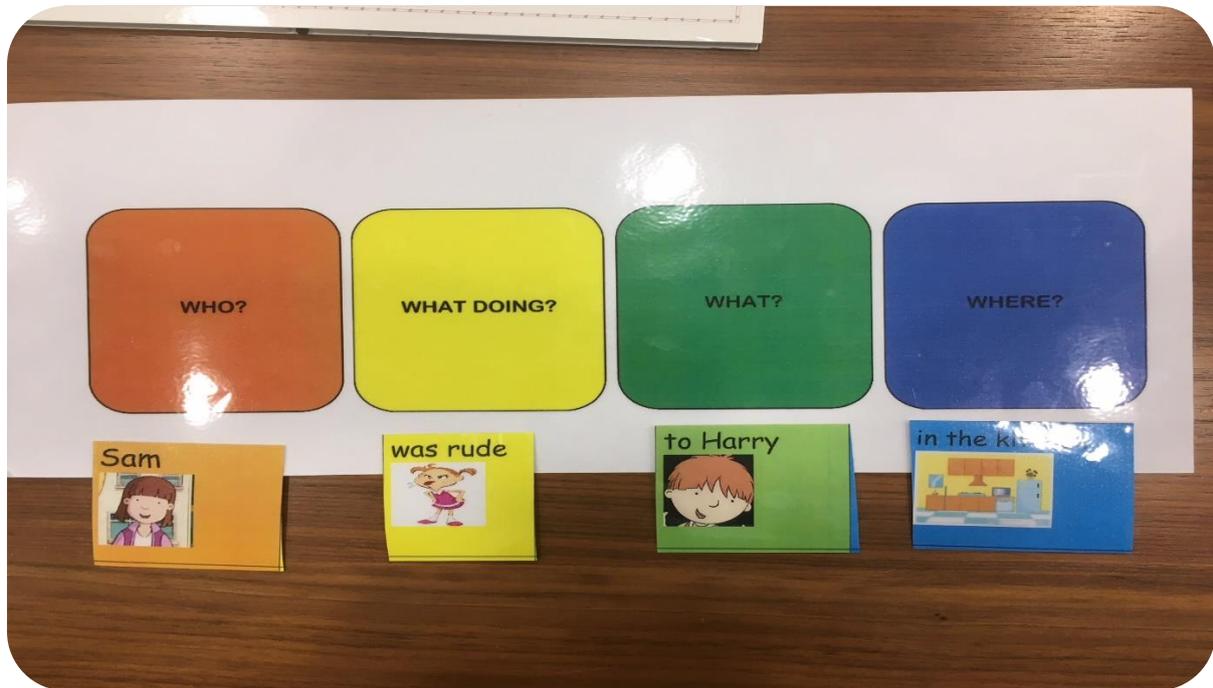
bus

ball

When checking understanding use Marion Blank's Levels of Questioning. The four levels encourage development of language and vocabulary as well as skills in understanding and problem solving.

Blank's Levels of Questioning	
<p>Level 1 The object/things are present (here and now).</p> <p>What's that? Who's that? What are you doing? What's the lady doing? Find one like this. Find one the same as this. What did you touch?</p>    <p>What's the called?</p>	<p>Level 2 The object/things are present (here and now), but the child has to look at them in more detail.</p> <p>What's happening? What is in the box? Where's Spot? What color is the ball? What can you do with a ball? How are these different? Tell me something that is a fruit. Find one that is... and...</p>   <p>What can you do with scissors? Where's the chicken?</p>
<p>Level 3 The object/things may or may not be present and the questions are more complex and subtle.</p> <p>Find one to use with this. (Fork → knife) What will happen next? Tell me something different that? What is a...? (word definition) Find the things that are not... Following a set of directions → First open the box. Then put the ball in the box. Then hide the box.</p>  <p>How are "these" the same?</p>	<p>Level 4 The objects/things are not present and the child must use reasoning and problem solving.</p> <p>What will happen if...? What could you do when...? How can we tell that...? What could we use to ...? Why can't we...? Why is a ... made of ...?</p>  <p>Why can't we ride a lion?</p>

Support questioning by using **visuals**.



Written questions with a choice of answers will help understanding.

Page 1	Who came to the house to play? Biff Will Chip Wilma
Page 2	The children went outside. What did they climb? A house a tree a ladder
Page 3	What was in the tree? Biff a tree house a dog
Page 4	Who mended the roof? Dad the children Wilma
	Who is your favourite character? Chip Floppy Wilf Wilma Biff Draw a picture of them.

Provide varied ways for your child to retell the story.

Story sequencing



Storyboard



The Very Hungry Caterpillar

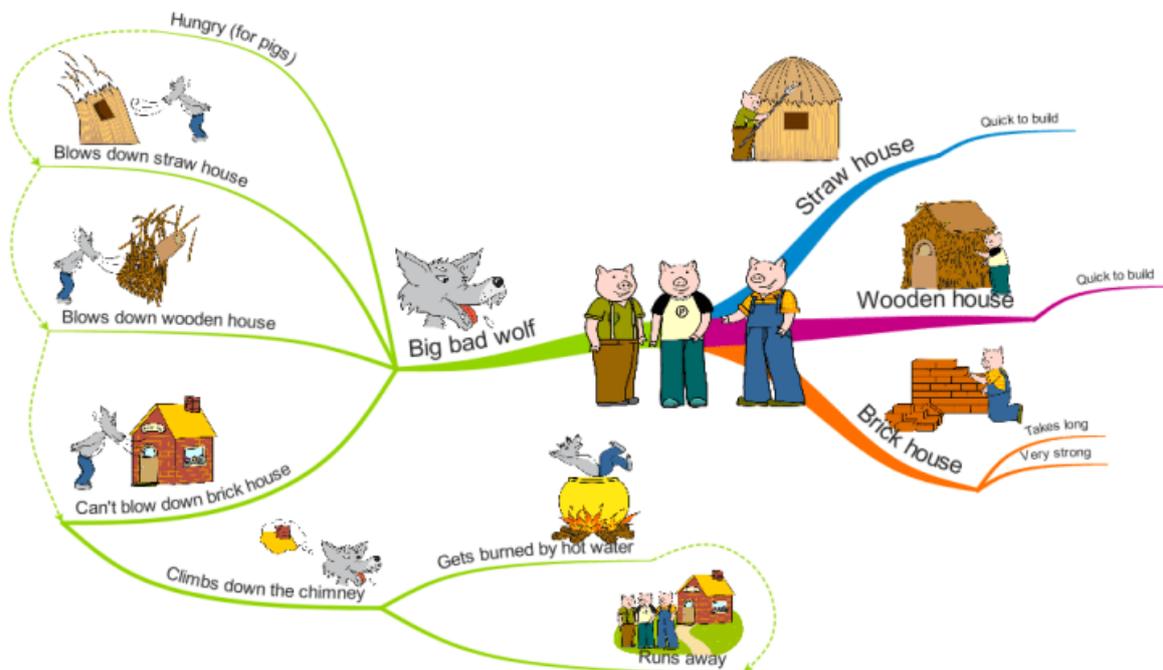
by Eric Carle



Name: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
→	→	→	→
Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Draw a picture of what happened 2 weeks later!
→	→	→	

Mind maps



Top Tips for checking understanding

- Use Blank's level of questioning.
- Support questions using visuals.
- Read and talk to your child about the story.
- Ask your child to retell the story verbally/by drawing a picture/ by signing/by acting it out, if appropriate.