

# Improving language skills

## Let's pretend

For some youngsters with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), especially those with high functioning characteristics, speech doesn't always present a problem. In fact, many of these children have advanced vocabularies. However, they may still have difficulties with some of the functional and social aspects of language.

The following activity can improve social and functional language in children with good speech skills. To perform this activity, you will require several youngsters, some with ASD. The goal is to teach the child with ASD how to engage in play with their peers. Pretend play can be difficult for children with ASD, but all it takes is a bit of practice.

Work with the youngsters as they play. Teach the routines of the games to the child with ASD, who may not pick up the rules from watching others. For each game, talk about the roles and interactions as they happen.

**Try some of these common scenarios:**

- House
- School
- Shop
- Vet
- Doctor
- Restaurant

# Hints & Tips

As you promote a child's language skills, keep the following tips in mind:

- Remember that some children with autism have trouble understanding verbal instructions. If possible, give the activity instructions in a variety of formats.
- Introduce these activities gradually to avoid overwhelming the child. It is best to work on one language-related game at a time.
- Make language activities fun and full of praise, no matter how small the progress. This is hard work for the child, even if you are making it fun.
- Read often and for long periods of time. This exposure to language is important for all children and essential for youngsters with autism.