**General expressive language classroom adjustments**

**What is expressive language?**

Expressive language refers to the ability to use language at a word, sentence and discourse level.

**Support for students with expressive language difficulties**

The following classroom adjustments may benefit students with expressive language difficulties. These strategies can be used in any classroom to support **all** students having difficulty using spoken language, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis or not.

These adjustments can also be used in smaller, targeted group activities to help students who require additional support.

**ADJUSTMENTS**

|  |  |
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| 1 | Give your student time to organise their thoughts and express themselves.Tell them what you will be asking them ahead of time or let them be third in line to speak rather than first. |
| 2 | Show genuine interest in what your student is saying, over and above how they are saying it. **Lights On with solid fill****Tips*** Show an interest in their message and desire to communicate rather than just correcting how they are communicating it.
* Give your student feedback to show you have understood them and value what they have said.
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| 3 | Use visuals to support expressive language.**Lights On with solid fill****Tips*** Provide sequencing pictures when planning narratives and recounts using keywords such as ‘who’, ‘when’ and ‘where’.
* Provide a visual structure where the student can fill in the gaps. For example, a story map / graphic organiser with questions such as ‘Who is the story about?’, ‘Where does the story start?’ etc.
* For older students, use a graphic organiser to structure persuasive paragraphs using the TEEL (Topic Sentence, Elaborate, Evidence, Link Sentence) paragraph structures.
* Sentence starters may support students who have difficulty starting a written task or contributing to class discussions. For example, if discussing whether mobile phones should be allowed at school, the teacher could write the prompt on the board ‘I think mobile phones should be allowed at school because …’.
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| 4 | Help your student build topic-specific word banks to expand their oral and written work. Before they write a persuasive piece, discuss and develop a word bank of persuasive terms, such as ‘in my opinion’, ‘strongly believe’ and ‘obviously’. |
| 5 | Explicitly teach important grammatical structures, such as conjunctions (joining words) to join ideas (e.g., before, until, if, although, unless) or how subordinate clauses add to or complete the meaning of a sentence.Show your student how rearranging a sentence can impact its meaning. For example, ‘The man was followed by the dog’ could be changed to ‘the dog was followed by the man’, which changes the meaning.  |
| 6 | Provide models of the correct sentence structure or grammar when you hear your student make errors. Rather than correcting directly by saying ‘No say it like this’, repeat the sentence back to them.Your student may say ‘The aeroplane **flied** in the sky’. You could say ‘Yes, you’re right the aeroplane **flew** in the sky. I once **flew** on an aeroplane. I **flew** to Brisbane’, emphasising the key words to draw your student’s attention to them and using them multiple times for reinforcement. |
| 7 | Use expansion to help build on what a student has expressed. Repeat what has been said and add a bit more detail. For example, if the student says, ‘It’s a dog’, you could say ‘Yes, it’s a **fluffy, white** dog’. |
| 8 | Encourage students to talk and share their interests in 1:1 or small group work to develop their ability to sequence and order their thoughts, express those thoughts in logical and sequential sentences and learn how to adjust their language use for their audiences. |
| 9 | If your student is having difficulty finding a particular word, the following cues may help.**Lights On with solid fill****Tips*** Use synonyms (e.g., ‘I think another word…’)
* Use word associations (e.g., salt and …) or sentence completion strategies (e.g., ‘Grass is …’)
* Encourage the student to describe the word they are looking for (e.g., ‘What does it look like?’ ‘What do we do with it?’)
* Provide them with the beginning sound or syllable (e.g., ‘It starts with a ssss’).
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| 10 | Where possible, introduce new topics/concepts ahead of time so your student is familiar with the language before it is presented in class. Alternatively, allocate time at the start of a new lesson to focus on the required vocabulary. This helps your students understand the vocabulary and practice using it accurately.**Lights On with solid fill****Tips*** Use picture books, diagrams and other visuals as a focus for discussion about the target words.
* Select and explicitly teach words essential to understanding the work and support students to explain the meaning in their own words.
* Teach new words in context of the students’ experiences, connecting the new word to background knowledge.
* Talk about words in terms of:
* the category they fall into
* the function they perform
* a description of the word (e.g., colour, taste, touch, smell, sound, size, meaning etc.)
* synonyms for the word
* opposites of the word
* what the word starts with
* what other words may be associated with the word.
* Provide examples of the word in context. Identify examples of how the word can and cannot be used to refine the student’s understanding. For example, with the word ‘arise’ you may say ‘We will keep you informed of any changes that arise’, when we talk about the past tense we don’t say ‘arised’, but ‘arose’ as in ‘The situation arose out of nothing’.
* Support understanding of vocabulary by using topic webs or semantic maps.
* Practice using new words in different formats, such as writing, drawing or in a role play.
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| 11 | Correct speech sound errors by modelling. For example, if the student says ‘**t**un’ for ‘**s**un’, respond by saying ‘Yes, the **s**un is out today’, emphasising the ‘s’ sound. This shows your genuine interest in what the student has to say while modelling a better way to say it. Students who repeatedly hear that what they are saying is wrong may become frustrated and view communication as an unpleasant experience.  |
| 12 | Exaggerate target error sounds and provide multiple exposures to correct pronunciations. For example, if the student says, ‘Where is my **t**oat?’, you might respond emphasising the ‘k’ sound, ‘Hmmm, I do not know where your **c**oat is. Where did you last see your **c**oat? What colour is your **c**oat? Maybe we can look together for your **c**oat’.The more often you say the word, the more opportunities your student has to hear it correctly and imitate.  |
| 13 | Students can learn and practice social skills by working in pairs or teams, group work, co-operative learning and / or playing games. Provide explicit instructions of the skills expected prior to these tasks, using visual cues, pictures and role play. For example, using speech bubbles with preferred ways to make requests during group work, such as ‘Do you think we could do this …?’ or ‘I like your idea, but perhaps …’.  |
| 14 | Practice social language skills through role play, rehearsal, or conversational games.  |
| 15 | When opportunities to practice social skills arise during the day, discuss the various ways people can respond to situations and model the language to be used. Using visuals such as [social stories](https://autismhub.education.qld.gov.au/resources/functional-behaviour-assessment-tool/help/social-narratives) or [comic strip conversations](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/social-stories-and-comic-strip-coversations) may support the student’s understanding.  |

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**IMPORTANT NOTE**

**REFER TO TABLES ON FOLLOWING PAGES** to see which of the above adjustments can be applied to signs of language difficulties as indicated in the corresponding checklists.

[Language for Learning Primary Checklist](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/learningneeds/Language_for_Learning_Primary_Checklist.DOCX)

[Language for Learning Secondary Checklist](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/learningneeds/Language_for_Learning_Secondary_Checklist.DOCX)

Use the results under the headings in checklists to identify which areas require additional support and match these to the corresponding adjustments.

**Linking adjustments to results from expressive language checklist – Primary level**

| ADJUSTMENTS | SIGNS OF LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY |
| --- | --- |
| Behaviour | Verbal memory / Sequencing | Comprehension | Expressive language / Story telling | Word retrieval / Vocabulary | Social Communication / Pragmatics | Saying Complex Words | Sound Awareness |
| 1. Give time
 | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |
| 1. Show genuine interest
 | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| 1. Use visuals
 | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Topic specific word banks
 |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Explicitly teach grammatical structures
 |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Behaviour | Verbal memory / Sequencing | Comprehension | Expressive language / Story telling | Word retrieval / Vocabulary | Social Communication / Pragmatics | Saying Complex Words | Sound Awareness |
| 1. Provide models of grammar and sentence structure
 |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Sentence expansion
 |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Student sharing
 | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Word finding
 |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |
| 1. Introducing new topics
 |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |
| 1. Model correct sounds
 |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Behaviour | Verbal memory / Sequencing | Comprehension | Expressive language / Story telling | Word retrieval / Vocabulary | Social Communication / Pragmatics | Saying Complex Words | Sound Awareness |
| 1. Emphasise and multiple exposure to sounds
 |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| 1. Social opportunity
 |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |
| 1. Social practice
 |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |
| 1. Provide social models
 |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |

**Linking adjustments to results from expressive language checklist – Secondary level**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ADJUSTMENTS | SIGNS OF LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY |
| **Academic and Literate Language** | **Behaviour** **Processing Auditory Information** | **Behaviour****Disguising Learning Problems** | **Behaviour** **Planning** | **Behaviour****Social Skills** | **Speaking and Listening****Language Comprehension** | **Speaking and Listening****Vocabulary** | **Speaking and Listening****Language Expression** | **Speaking and Listening****Text Level Language** |
| 1. Give time
 |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Show genuine interest
 |  | Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Use visuals
 | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Topic specific word banks
 | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |
| 1. Explicitly teach grammatical structures
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Academic and Literate Language  | Behaviour Processing Auditory Information | BehaviourDisguising Learning Problems | Behaviour Planning | BehaviourSocial Skills | Speaking and ListeningLanguage Comprehension | Speaking and ListeningVocabulary | Speaking and listeningLanguage Expression | Speaking and ListeningText Level Language |
| 1. Provide models of grammar and sentence structure
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Sentence expansion
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Student sharing
 | Checkmark with solid fill |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Word finding
 |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |
| 1. Introducing new topics
 | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Academic and Literate Language  | Behaviour Processing Auditory Information | BehaviourDisguising Learning Problems | Behaviour Planning | BehaviourSocial Skills | Speaking and ListeningLanguage Comprehension | Speaking and ListeningVocabulary | Speaking and ListeningLanguage Expression | Speaking and ListeningText Level Language |
| 1. Model correct sounds
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Emphasise and multiple exposure to sounds
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |
| 1. Social opportunities
 |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Social practice
 |  |  |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Provide social models
 |  |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  | Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |  |  |