These MOVING ON Questionnaires are designed to enable you to check your child’s progress at particular stages of development.

This questionnaire is designed to be used with 3½ to 5 year old children to develop the skills they need to join in at school. Do not worry if your child cannot do all the tasks, simply focus on the ones that they have not yet mastered and practice these.

The questionnaire looks at different areas of your child’s development including sensory, fine motor, activities of daily living (e.g. dressing and eating), listening, understanding, talking and interacting skills.

- Try each activity with your child before selecting a response.
- Make completing this questionnaire a game that is fun for you and your child.
- Make sure your child is well rested and fed.
- If your child shows signs of distress do not continue.
Question 1

Can your child snip with scissors?

*Developing scissor skills is an important milestone in your child’s life. By learning to use scissors they practice using a tripod grasp (i.e. using thumb, index and middle fingers together) which then develops into the ideal grasp for writing.*

*It is important that your child uses the appropriate scissors for their dominant hand (left or right handed scissors).*

---

### Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

**Pre-scissor Activity Ideas**

- Use salad tongs to pick socks off the floor and put in laundry basket.
- Use salad tongs to drop cotton wool balls into a box.
- Use tweezers to pick up tiny things like raisins, beads and rolled up pieces of paper.
- Peg clothes pegs all around the edges of a shoe box.
- Use a turkey baster or medicine pipette to squirt water in the bath.
- Get your child to pinch his thumb and index finger all the way along a playdough (see KIDS Scotland for homemade playdough recipe) sausage to make indentations.
Question 1 - Fine Motor

- Make a sock puppet with your child and get them to open & close his mouth to ‘feed it’.

Activity Ideas for Correct Grasp

- When holding a pair of scissors for the first time reinforce your child’s hand position by getting them to do the ‘thumbs up’ sign. Remind your child each time the correct way to hold the scissors, reinforce the ‘thumbs up’ and give them plenty opportunities to practice. Place a small sticker on your child’s thumb so that they can look at it before they start cutting.

- Get your child to hold a beanbag (or small soft toy) between their elbow and side whilst they practice cutting to ensure that their hand and arm position remain correct whilst cutting.

- Try marking the thumb hole with a piece of coloured tape so your child knows where to place their thumb.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

- Ask your child to snip a playdough sausage (see KIDS Scotland for homemade playdough recipe) into pieces with their scissors.

- Try getting your child to cut a plastic drinking straw into pieces to make ‘beads’. They can then lace them together to practice their threading skills.

- Get your child to snip along a piece of thick card (as this is more rigid for a child to hold). Then get them to try snipping different textures before moving onto paper.
Question 2

Can your child hold a pencil near the tip with their thumb and fingers?

As soon as your child stops putting things in their mouth give them little pieces of chalk or crayon and big sheets of paper to scribble on. It is important to encourage a good grip from the start so make sure your child is able to identify and name their thumb, index finger (pointer finger) and middle finger so they can start to use them together.

When your child can hold a mark maker (i.e. pencil, crayon, chalk etc.) using their thumb, pointer and middle finger only; start to reinforce a good tripod grasp. Children develop bad habits and it is much harder to break these habits once they become established. It is important to use a tripod grasp as it is the most efficient method. As your child gets older and the volume of work increases they may be susceptible to pain or fatigue if they are not using the proper pencil grip.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

- **Sing a Song**
  Sing the Tommy Thumb song (see KIDS Scotland for lyrics).

- **Colour in Pictures**
  Use a variety of different mark makers (e.g. thick felt pens, chunky crayons, chunky chalk etc.) and encourage your child to colour in pictures.

- **Paint**
  Finger paint with your child and encourage them to use a different colour for each finger (thumb, pointer (index) and middle fingers only).

- **Marbles**
  Pick up marbles using the thumb, pointer (index) and middle fingers only.
Question 2 - Fine Motor

Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

- Use short pencils or crayons to encourage your child to only use their thumb, pointer (index) and middle finger.

- Put an elastic band around the pencil (2cm from the tip) and encourage your child to always place their thumb and first two fingers on the band, or alternately you can buy pencil grips that will encourage your child to develop a good tripod grasp.

- Use chunky triangular pencil/crayons which will encourage the correct pencil grasp.

- Give your child plenty of opportunities to try using a pencil/crayon. Let them score off items on your shopping list as you put them in your trolley. Encourage them to do dot-to-dots and mazes.

- For any of the above activities it can be helpful to encourage your child to hold a small cotton wool ball (or another small object) in the palm of their hand using their ring (ruby ring) and pinkie (baby small) finger as this will ensure these fingers do not become part of the pencil grasp.
Question 3 - Fine Motor

Can your child draw a horizontal line, vertical line and circle?

Pre writing skills are required before your child learns to write. They need to know how to hold and use a pencil to draw, write, copy and colour. Letters, numbers and early drawings are made up of a number of pre writing shapes. It is important that your child masters these shapes prior to learning to write as these shapes are used to form legible letters and numbers. Children tend to learn the shapes in the order below.

Activity Ideas

- Get your child to trace over vertical, horizontal lines, and circular shapes on a large sheet of paper using items such as building blocks, beads, playdough (see KIDS Scotland for homemade playdough recipe), string, pipe cleaners and stickers.

- Encourage your child to draw all the shapes using their pointer (index) finger in a baking tray which can be filled with wet sand, dry sand, rice or lentils. You can also use shaving foam or foam soap on the tiles in your bathroom or on a baking tray.

- Get your child to paint the shapes using their pointer (index) finger or a paint brush.

- Get your child to draw the shapes using a variety of different tools (e.g. chalk on pavement, crayons at an easel or felt tip pens).
Question 3 - Fine Motor

- Place two small toys at either side of a large sheet of paper and get your child to draw a horizontal line between them. Then move the toys to the top and bottom of the paper so your child can practice a vertical line. To encourage your child to draw a circle, place a plate, cup or any other round item on the paper and ask your child to draw around the object.

- Encourage your child to complete basic dot-to-dot puzzles, mazes, drawing trails, etc.
Question 4

Can your child draw a person?

By 2½ years your child will start to draw people that resemble a tadpole/amoeba, with arms and/or legs attached directly to the face. The face may not have any features.

By 3 years your child will start to include some features e.g. eyes and mouth. It is not until after the age of 4 that your child will start to draw a separate body.

Drawing is a way for your child to be able to show their thoughts and understanding of the world. Drawing develops through a number of stages and by the age of 4 a child should be able to draw a basic representation of a person.

- **Name Body Parts**
  Make sure you always name body parts when washing or dressing your child to reinforce them. Also sing songs that encourage naming body parts (e.g. ‘Head, Shoulder, Knees and Toes’).

- **Play a game of ‘Simon Says’** and get your child to touch different parts of their body including facial features.

- **Drawing Faces**
  Try getting your child to draw a face on a paper plate to make a mask or cut out different facial features from a magazine and stick them on a paper plate to create a face.

- **Draw somebody together**; you draw a circle on a piece of paper and get your child to add the facial features and then limbs.

- **Ask your child to lie on the back of a large piece of wallpaper** and draw round them. You can then get your child to draw on features and clothes to the outline and name the body parts whilst they are doing this.

- **Get your child to trace round their hand or foot on a piece of paper**, also try doing self-portraits or a family portrait.
Question 5 - Activities of Daily Living

Question 5

Can your child take off and put on their jacket (they may need assistance with fastenings)?

By one year your child should be able to help you as you dress them by pushing their arms and legs through items of clothing. By 2 years they should be able to remove an unfastened jacket.

By 2½ years they can put on easy clothing such as a jacket or open front shirts without zips or buttons.

By the age of 3 your child should be able to assist with zipping and unzipping as well as separating the zip at the bottom of the jacket. Between the ages of 3-4 years your child should be able to put their hands through both armholes and down the sleeves in front opening clothing (e.g. jacket). They should also be able to take the same item off completely.

By 4 years old your child should be able to get their clothes on and off independently but will not be able to manage fastenings (e.g. zips and buttons) for another year or two.

Hints and Tips

- It is much easier for your child to learn how to undress before dressing. Therefore practice taking off their jacket first.

- Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are a number of ways in which you can help:
  - Physically assist your child
  - Show your child
  - Tell your child

You can use each of these ways individually or any combination depending on what suits your child. Please be aware that some children cannot look and listen at the same time so limit the amount of information you give.
Question 5 - Activities of Daily Living

- A good way to teach your child how to get dressed is to break down each task into small steps and teach him the last step first. This technique is called backward chaining (more information is available on the website). Once they can do the last step of the task, teach them the second-last step, then the third-last step and so on.

- If your child is struggling it can be tempting to take over. Give your child time to work it out for themselves and give loads of encouragement. If necessary, talk them through what to do and only intervene if they get really stuck. It is often better to practice these things when you are not in a rush so weekend mornings are better than when you are rushing out to school/work.

- Your child needs opportunities to practice putting their arms into sleeves. This can sometimes be easier when using larger items of clothing so let them practice on your jacket.

- There are a number of methods that can be used to put on a jacket. Try all methods to see which way your child has more success with. Once you have identified the method that suits your child share this with other people (e.g. school, grandparents, child minder etc.) so that everyone uses the same method.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Play a game by taking an adult sized shirt/jacket, seal the cuffs with elastic bands and then hide small toys down each sleeve. Ask your child to put their arm in and pull out the toy.

- Play dress up with your child; use a variety of oversized clothes.
Question 6 - Activities of Daily Living

Question 6

Can your child use/go to the toilet independently by doing the following:

1. Do they let you know they need to go to the toilet?
2. Can they get to the toilet on time most occasions?
3. Can they manage their clothing?
4. Can they flush the toilet?

If your child is not yet fully toilet trained then speak to your Health Visitor or GP, remember it is not uncommon for children to still have accidents at night at this stage.

Independent toileting is a very complex task with lots of complex steps. By 3 years your child may be able to use the toilet during the day with few accidents, but still need help with wiping and managing their clothes.

Hints and Tips

- It is important your child feels secure when they are sitting on the toilet. Using a toilet step or a sturdy box under their feet will make them feel safer and therefore concentrate on the task at hand. A toilet set insert may also help your child feel safer.

- Practice and Patience; as with all new skills this task will take time to learn so don’t expect your child to master it straight away. Break the task down into its separate parts (e.g. managing clothes, wiping or washing hands etc.) and only tackle one part at a time with you offering support with other aspects of the task.
Question 6 - Activities of Daily Living

- As with any new challenge, the use of a reward chart can be very motivating for a child. You can set a goal at the beginning of the week or fortnight around what your child is to compete (e.g. final wipe without physical assistance); if they achieve success with this they receive a sticker for their chart which can be used for a reward at the end of the set time period.

- Ask nursery or school staff for their advice as they have a large amount of knowledge and experience in this area.
Question 7 - Activities of Daily Living

Question 7

Can your child wash and dry their hands independently?

Hand hygiene should be part of every person’s daily routine. Learning this skill early reduces the risks of illness and infections. Now that your child is attending nursery it is important that they can complete this task independently as there may not be an adult present at all times to supervise.

Hints and Tips

- Your child learns best when they can copy you, so give them plenty of opportunities to watch. Tell them what you are doing as you wash your hands and then ask them to copy you.

- Make sure your child can reach the sink; use a toilet step or stool.

- There are a variety of different types of soap e.g. bar, liquid, foam and hand gel. Some children do not like the texture of soap therefore try each variety and see what suits your child best.

- There are also a number of ways for your child to dry their hands. Some children can be scared of hand dryers therefore offer them alternatives like paper towels. It is important that you do not completely avoid hand dryers as when your child is exposed to these unexpectedly they may become overly distressed. Make sure you continue to use public toilets with hand dryers but allow your child to choose whether they use them or not.

- It is a good idea to sing a short song whilst you and your child wash your hands to ensure that you carry out the task for the recommended minimum 15 seconds.

- Visit Health Protection Scotland for downloadable resources, techniques and animation with song.
Question 8

Can your child use cutlery independently e.g. can they use a spoon for yoghurt or a fork for pasta?

Children begin to hold a spoon around 9-10 months. By 12 months they can take a spoon to their mouth. They start to manage a fork around 2 years of age. By 4½ years they can use a spoon and fork together. At 5 years they can master spreading with a knife. It is not until your child is 7-8 years that they can use a knife and fork together.

Hints and Tips

- Whenever possible ensure that your child can reach the work surface. They may need to stand on a chair or step. You want the work surface to be at the height on their elbow. If seated at the table ensure their feet are supported so they can use their hands freely.

- Think about the utensils you are using. Knifes with thick and/or textured handles are easier to hold. A knife with a short handle is easier to control. Use a plate with a raised edge when spreading and use a non-slip mat under a chopping board when cutting.

- Encourage a good cutlery grasp right from the start; your child's index finger should point down the back of the knife towards the blade.

- Work on one aspect of using a knife at a time e.g. spreading or cutting.

- Children learn in different ways so you might need to vary your approach. There are a number of ways in which you can help;
  - Physically assist your child (Use the hand-over-hand technique, the child grasps the knife while the adult puts their hand over the top of the child’s).
  - Show your child
  - Tell your child
Question 8 - Activities of Daily Living

You can use each of these ways individually or any combination depending on what suits your child. Please be aware that some children cannot look and listen at the same time so limit the amount of information you giving.

- Start off with soft spreads and firm foods when spreading. Spreading very soft butter or jam onto toast and spreading runny icing onto fairy cakes etc. As they become more proficient at this start to use spreads with firmer consistencies such as peanut butter or Nutella.

- Start off with chopping soft foods and move to firmer foods. For example practice chopping mushrooms and bananas before moving onto apples and potatoes.

- You can also practice cutting and spreading during other activities e.g. when playing with play dough or during craft activities.

- You can use each of these ways individually or any combination depending on what suits your child. Please be aware that some children cannot look and listen at the same time so limit the amount of information you giving.
Question 9 - Understanding

Question 9

Does your child understand multiple step instructions like 'Get your socks from under your bed and put them in the bottom drawer'?

Your child will start to understand words that are important in their life like ‘Mummy’, ‘Daddy’, ‘cup’ and ‘No!’ and of course, their own name. They will then start to understand short phrases and simple instructions and then as they understand more words they will understand more complex instructions. There are a number of reasons why your child might not follow instructions.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

There are lots of reasons why your child might not understand instructions.

Help them focus on what is important by:

- Reducing distractions, like TV, for talking times
- Demonstrating or using gestures and signs to help show your child what to do
- Using their name and facing them before you give an instruction
- Using short chunks of language and emphasising the important points e.g. 'Get Teddy. Put him here (use gesture)'
- Giving them time to think (around 10 seconds) and then repeating the instruction

If you are still worried about your child’s understanding of everyday language, contact your local Speech and Language Therapy department to discuss your concerns.
Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

There are lots of reasons why your child might not understand instructions. If you have concerns about your child’s hearing speak to your Health Visitor.

Sometimes children don’t understand if they are not fully paying attention. The Attention and Listening advice sheet may help.

Help them focus on what is important by:

- Reducing distractions, like TV, for talking times.
- Demonstrating or using gestures and signs to help show your child what to do.
- Using their name and facing them before you give an instruction.
- Using short chunks of language and emphasising the important points e.g. ‘Get Teddy. Put him here (use gesture)’.
- Giving them time to think (around 10 seconds) and then repeating the instruction.
Question 10 - Understanding

Question 10

Does your child understand questions?

Children learn about questions in stages. The first questions that children understand are usually about naming things for example ‘What’s that? As pre-school children develop they will start to understand describing questions e.g. ‘What are they doing? Where are they?’.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

Children learn about questions in stages. The first questions that children understand are usually about naming things for example ‘What’s that? As pre-school children develop they will start to understand describing questions e.g. ‘What are they doing? Where are they?’

If your child is struggling to understand basic naming or describing questions you can help by:

- Talking about the ‘here and now’ to help your child tune into your questions.
- Avoiding questions and commenting instead. If you describe what you see, it lets your child hear the words they don’t know.
- Reduce the words in a question and simplify what your child has to understand. Instead of ‘Can you remember where you left your blue jacket?’ Try ‘Is your jacket at Gran’s?’.
- Use facial expression, tone of voice and gesture to help your child know that you need more information from them.
- Use choices instead of asking questions. If you ask ‘What do you want for your snack?’ your child has to understand all of the words and generate an answer. Try asking ‘Banana or apple?’.

If you are worried about your child’s understanding of language, contact your local Speech and Language Therapy department to discuss your concerns.
Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

Children learn about questions in stages. The first questions that children understand are usually about naming things for example ‘What’s that?’ As pre-school children develop they will start to understand describing questions e.g. ‘What are they doing? Where are they?’

If your child is struggling to understand questions you can help by:

- Talking about the ‘here and now’ to help your child tune into your questions.

- Avoiding questions and comment instead. If you describe what you see, it lets your child hear the words they don’t know.

- Reducing the words in a question and simplifying what your child has to understand. Instead of ‘Can you remember where you left your blue jacket?’ Try ‘Is your jacket at Gran’s?’.

- Using facial expression, tone of voice and gesture to help your child know that you need more information from them.

- Instead of asking lots of questions to get information try saying ‘Tell me more’.

- Using choices instead of asking questions. If you ask ‘What do you want for your snack?’ your child has to understand all of the words and generate an answer. Try asking ‘Banana or apple?’.

- Give your child lots of time to think about their answer- don’t jump in with another question too quickly.

- What/ where/ who questions are easier to understand than how/ when / why questions. Avoid how/ when / why if your child is just starting to understand questions.
Question 11 – Using Words

**Question 11**

Can your child use sentences of more than 3 words to communicate with you?

*As children learn more and more words they will naturally start trying to use basic sentences to communicate with you.*

*As they get older, they continue to learn new words. This means that they are able to use longer phrases when talking.*

**Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity**

As children learn more and more words they will naturally start trying to use basic sentences to communicate with you.

As they get older, they continue to learn new words. This means that they are able to use longer phrases when talking.

There may be many reasons why your child is not yet using sentences. If your child has only recently started using single words they will need more time to put sentences together. Try some of the advice below. If you are still concerned and would like more advice please contact your local [Speech Language Therapy department](#).

- *Talk about what you are doing:* Children learn how to use language from the adults around them, so it’s important to give them good examples to copy.

- *Describe Instead of Asking:* Try not to ask too many questions! They may not have the language to answer yet. You can say back what they would if they could. This lets them hear the words they have not got and they may use them next time. Instead of asking ‘What are you doing?’ You could say ‘You are painting a lovely picture’ you will probably get a response from your child this way.

- *Repeat new words often:* Children understand words before they can use them.

- *Copy and Add More:* Listen and respond to what your child is trying to say. It’s important that when you respond, you try to build your child’s language – you can add more, new or different words onto what they have already said e.g. If your child says “Look bird” You could say “Yes, the bird is flying in the sky”.

[www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids)
Question 11 – Using Words

- Focus on what your child is saying not how they are saying it
  Your child’s talking may sound immature. Don’t worry about grammar or speech sounds at this stage. Instead focus on letting them hear lots of words/sentences. If you repeat back what they are trying to say it will let them hear the correct form e.g. if they say “me dump”- you can say ‘yes you are jumping really high!’ It’s great that they are trying to put their words together, even if there are lots of mistakes! See the Listening, Understanding, Talking and Interacting page for more information.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

Show interest in what your child is trying to say rather than how they are saying it. Be sure to give your child plenty of time to think about what they want to say and get their message across. It’s important that they do not feel rushed.

As your child is learning to use longer sentences it is okay for them to make some mistakes. Try not to directly correct their errors. Instead repeat back what your child has said in the correct way e.g. your child says “him falled over” You can say “yes, he fell over”. With your help and over time, their sentences should start to sound more mature and have less mistakes.

Continue to make time for general chat, story books and games together. You can emphasise any new or different words you want your child to pay attention to.
Question 12 – Listening and Attention

Question 12

Does your child sit and listen for a story and are they able to tell you about it later on?

Children have to learn to focus their attention on to different things. This usually starts with attending to people, then to objects, then being able to share their attention between people and things they are interested in. Children need to develop their attention skills before they learn to understand words and learn to talk. Children may be able to hear but not listen to what you say. Listening to language involves hearing the words, paying attention to them, thinking about them and then understanding them.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

There may be lots of reasons why your child isn’t able to sit and listen to a story e.g. they may be too busy playing or they may not be interested in books yet! You can use picture books, catalogues, leaflets- anything that you can look and talk about together!

Listening and attention are important skills for language and communication (click on Building Blocks of Language for more information) and there are some tips you can try to help your child:

- Don’t force your child to listen to a story if they are not interested. Find a time that is easier for them to listen and join in e.g. bed time.

- Allow your child to explore books or other activities and choose what they want to do.

- Before you begin turn off all background distractions e.g. TV, radio, tablets etc.

- When your child sits quietly to listen, make a fuss of this by describing their behaviour in a positive way e.g. ‘What lovely quiet listening and good looking!’.

- Start with trying to make a comment as you turn each page rather than read the whole story. Some children will be more interested in talking about the pictures than listening to the words.

- Wait and allow your child to comment on the pictures.

- Reduce your questions.

- Say it again!
Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

There may be lots of reasons why your child isn’t able to sit and listen to a story e.g. they may be too busy playing or they may not be interested in books yet! You can use picture books, catalogues, leaflets- anything that you can look and talk about together!

Listening and attention are important skills for language and communication (click on Building Blocks of Language for more information) and there are some tips you can try to help your child:

- Allow your child to choose a book.
- Read the story and leave out the last word for your child to say.
- Encourage your child to tell you the story.
- Repeat back what they say.
- Ask simple questions “what is going to happen?” “what did the man say?” but comment more than you question.

Keep reading and talking about books with your child. This can be an enjoyable and rewarding time to have with your child that helps with language development and prepares them for school.
Question 13 – Interaction

Question 13

Does your child enjoy interacting with friends, taking turns and sharing most of the time?

Many children around this age will have been in nursery for at least a year and will enjoy taking turns and sharing with their friends most of the time. Friendships are important for helping your child develop their communication and social skills. They are also important for your child’s overall wellbeing! These are key areas to help your child settle into school and progress with their learning.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

Many children around this age will have been in nursery for at least a year and will enjoy taking turns and sharing with their friends most of the time. Friendships are important for helping your child develop their communication and social skills. They are also important for your child’s overall wellbeing! These are key areas to help your child settle into school and progress with their learning.

Getting started with friendships and social development:

- Sometimes it’s easier to start with one friend at a time for short periods of time. You may want to keep favourite toys out of the way for this to help your child focus on the friendship.

- Try to be aware if your child is not comfortable and don’t push them if they become upset.

- Talk about situations with your child before they happen, such as telling them what to expect and what they could say to join in with other children.

- You can practise turn taking and sharing with your child through table top games, such as pop up pirate, matching games, jenga etc. This helps your child understand about winning and not winning with friends!

- You can help by explaining some simple friendship rules to help them understand what to do, e.g. saying hello to someone when they say hello to you.

- Try to provide different opportunities for your child to play with other children e.g. play dates, Bookbug, bounce and rhyme, playgroups.

www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids
Question 13 – Interaction

If you still have concerns after trying these tips, speak to other people who know your child well e.g. your child’s keyworker at nursery to ask if they have concerns about your child’s interaction with friends. If you are still concerned speak to your Health Visitor or you can contact local Speech and Language Therapy department.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

You can help your child develop their social skills with friends by:

- Making it easier by starting with one friend at a time for short periods of time. You may want to keep favourite toys out of the way for this to help your child focus on the friendship.

- Trying to be aware if your child is not comfortable and not pushing them if they become upset.

- Talking about situations with your child before they happen, such as telling them what to expect and what they could say to join in with other children.

- Practising turn taking and sharing with your child through table top games, such as pop up pirate, matching games, jenga etc. This helps your child understand about winning and not winning with friends!

- Explaining some simple friendship rules to help them understand what to do, e.g. saying hello to someone when they say hello to you.

- Providing different opportunities for your child to play with other children e.g. play dates, Bookbug, bounce and rhyme, playgroups.

If you still have concerns after trying these tips, speak to your child’s keyworker at nursery to find out about their interaction with friends in a different setting. Children can be different in different situations.
Question 14 – Fluency

Do the words in your child’s sentences easily flow?

Between the ages of two and five years, your child is learning many new words, beginning to use more sentences, expressing new ideas and asking lots of questions. Due to this rapid stage of development, some children when learning to talk can begin to stumble over words; have too many pauses in their speech or frequently stop and start their sentences. Some children go through phases, (e.g. days/weeks/months) when they find it easy to talk and then phases when they find talking more difficult. These non-fluent phases can coincide with bursts of language development and as your child is more able to plan and coordinate more complex sentences and ideas, these non-fluent phases will happen less frequently and the fluent phases will become longer.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

Between the ages of two and five years, your child is learning many new words, beginning to use more sentences, expressing new ideas and asking lots of questions. Due to this rapid stage of development, some children when learning to talk can begin to stumble over words; have too many pauses in their speech or frequently stop and start their sentences. This can sound like a stammer. For some children, stammering can begin quite gradually and for some children it can happen all of a sudden, almost overnight and sometimes quite severely. This can be quite upsetting for your child and for you.

Almost all children will become more fluent as they get older as their language skills develop but some can continue to get stuck and find talking difficult.

If you are concerned or notice that your child is having difficulty saying words/sentences easily then it is important to seek help and advice as early as possible.

You can help by:

- Showing you are interested in WHAT they are trying to say and not HOW they are saying it.
- Using simple language when playing or talking to them – this will help their fluency as it encourages your child to use similar language to you.
Question 14 – Fluency

- Spending one to one time with your child for 5 minutes each day and limit other distractions.
- Slow down your speech rate by putting more pauses in – this will give your child more time to think and plan. Try not to rush your child when they are speaking.
- Ask one question at a time and give them time to answer.
- Reassuring your child about their speech if they are aware of their difficulty talking. Try saying “you’re just learning to talk right now and we can all have tricky words at times- that’s ok”.

You can get more advice at

Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

Some children go through phases, (e.g. days/weeks/months) when they find it easy to talk and then phases when they find talking more difficult. These non-fluent phases can coincide with bursts of language development and as your child is more able to plan and coordinate more complex sentences and ideas, these non-fluent phases will happen less frequently and the fluent phases will become longer. In time, as your child’s language skills develop, they will become more fluent.

If your child’s fluency is variable and it has been going on for a long time i.e. over 6-12 months it is best to seek advice and help from your local Speech and Language Therapy department.
Question 15

Do other people understand your child most of the time?

By the time most children go to school they have a good range of speech sounds and use these in words. Some children won’t use the full range of speech sounds until they are over 6 years old. It is common for some children to still find some sounds tricky, particularly the ‘r’ and ‘th’ sounds.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

Some children won’t use the full range of speech sounds until they are over 6 years of age. Speech sounds tend to develop in a pattern that means simpler easier sounds will be used instead of more complex ones for example ‘rabbit’ becomes ‘wabbit’. This is perfectly normal. Have a look at the Speech Sound Development section to see when most sounds should be in place.

If you feel that your child struggles with early sounds or if they are getting frustrated contact your local Speech and Language Therapy department for more advice.
Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

By the time most children go to school they have a good range of speech sounds and use these in words. Some children won’t use the full range of speech sounds until they are over 6 years old. It is common for some children to still find some sounds tricky, particularly the ‘r’ and ‘th’ sounds. Have a look at the Speech Sound Development section to see when most sounds should be in place.

Remember if your child was delayed to start using words and sentences, their speech may need extra time to mature.

If there are some sounds that your child still struggles with it would be helpful to:

- Respond to what your child has said not how clearly they have said it.
- Repeat the correct pronunciation of the word back to your child so that they hear the correct sounds to use, though try to avoid asking your child to say it again.
- If your child finds particular sounds difficult then it would be useful to make a scrapbook with your child with pictures of things that have the tricky sound in them. You can do this by cutting out pictures from magazines/catalogues or doing a drawing activity together. This will give you the opportunity to say the word many times for your child to hear the correct pronunciation.
- Play games to look for words that have the sound your child finds tricky, including I-Spy, I went shopping and bought…, look and listen for things or words that have the sound in it in books or games that you play throughout the week.
Question 16

Does your child enjoy social games and imaginative play?

Play is an essential activity to help children learn how to interact and develop language skills. Children at this stage will naturally have different play activities that interest them and should enjoy playing with others as well as playing by themselves.

Activity Ideas for your child if they are not yet doing the activity

Play is an essential activity to help children learn how to interact and develop language skills. Children at this stage will naturally have different play activities that interest them and should enjoy playing with others as well as playing by themselves. You can help your child to play and develop attention, communication and language by:

- Joining your child in activities that they enjoy. Try not to take over but help your child by watching and following their lead.

- Showing your child how to play with toys e.g. feeding a doll or teddy, putting petrol in the car, building a house with bricks.

- Giving your child choices during play e.g. if you are playing with bricks giving them choices of colour or size of bricks.

- Giving your child examples of things they can say during play. Name the toys and talk about what you are doing with them e.g. ‘that’s a cool plane you have!’ Give good examples of phrases they can use when playing with other children e.g. ‘It’s your turn now’.

- Trying to make sure your child has a variety of different types of play including toys, books and a chance to hear and join in songs and rhymes. Your child may have a favourite activity but giving them lots of opportunity to try different things will prepare them for going to school.

- Although children enjoy spending time on tablets and phones, these activities are quite isolating try encouraging your child to choose a range of activities and games (click on the Screen Time Leaflet for more information).

- Children (and adults) can become very engrossed in screens. It can be hard for a child to ‘hear’ your talk if they are intently focussed on a screen. Try to limit screen time. If you need to talk to your child, ask them to put the tablet down before you talk.
Activity Ideas for your child if they are nearly doing the activity

Play is an essential activity to help children learn how to interact and develop language skills. Children at this stage will naturally have different play activities that interest them and should enjoy playing with others as well as playing by themselves. You can help your child to play and develop attention, communication and language by:

- Joining your child in activities that they enjoy. Try not to take over but help your child by watching and following their lead.

- Showing your child how to play with toys e.g. feeding a doll or teddy, putting petrol in the car, building a house with bricks.

- Giving your child choices during play e.g. if you are playing with bricks giving them choices of colour or size of bricks.

- Giving your child examples of things they can say during play. Name the toys and talk about what you are doing with them e.g. ‘that’s a cool plane you have!’ Give good examples of phrases they can use when playing with other children e.g. ‘It’s your turn now’.

- Trying to make sure your child has a variety of different types of play including toys, books and a chance to hear and join in songs and rhymes. Your child may have a favourite activity but giving them lots of opportunity to try different things will prepare them for going to school.

- Although children enjoy spending time on tablets and phones, these activities are quite isolating try encouraging your child to choose a range of activities and games (click on the [Screen Time Leaflet](#) for more information).

- Children (and adults) can become very engrossed in screens. It can be hard for a child to ‘hear’ your talk if they are intently focussed on a screen. Try to limit screen time. If you need to talk to your child, ask them to put the tablet down before you talk.