

Celebrate Good Times

Ideas and activities to celebrate communication milestones – big and small



Celebrate good times

Celebration is an important part of life. Communication milestones and successes can, and should, be celebrated whether they are big or small. So whether it is a child's first words, or a student's first presentation to their class, it is a big occasion.

For some children and young people, communication is a daily struggle. For them, it is even more important to celebrate these milestones. It is also vital to celebrate the number of ways there are to get your message across, whether it be sign language, an electronic voice output communication aid, using images or other languages.

Celebrations can be shared between everyone, no matter what your age, language or culture. It gives children, families and communities an opportunity to share their experiences through creative activities, music, photos and of course talk.

Celebrations happen throughout the year. As we move towards the end of the national year of communication, it is the perfect opportunity to look back at the year and celebrate the work which has been done across the country and the successes people have had.

This pack will offer suggestions for how to mark celebrations, how to get children talking about their experiences and links to resources you can access.

What's inside this pack?

- **Celebrate Special Moments** – ideas on how to celebrate special moments in your child's life, plus questions to help celebratory conversations flow.
- **Celebrate Festivities** – help your children learn signs linked to Christmas and see if you can learn them too.
- **Celebrating success** – ideas on how to hold a mini-awards ceremony at home, in nursery and school settings, plus certificate templates to amend.
- **Celebrating your expression** – a fun game to pass on 'Hello' in as many ways as you wish; using sign, symbols and different languages.
- **Celebrating people** – tell friends and family what you like about them. Do this in person or by other means, such as by social media.
- **Celebrating diversity** – a 'Show and Tell' activity to celebrate different cultures and languages.
- **Celebrating your city** - ideas on how you can use your town or city to encourage and celebrate communication.
- **Supporting children with English as an Additional Language** – background information and advice.
- **Helpful links** - useful websites to give more ideas for supporting communication in whatever form it comes.



About Hello

Hello is the national year of communication – a campaign to make communication for all children and young people a priority in homes and schools across the country.

Hello is run by The Communication Trust, a group of 40 voluntary organisations with expertise in speech, language and communication in partnership with Jean Gross, the Government’s Communication Champion.

Hello is sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment. Visit www.hello.org.uk to find further information, resources and to sign up for regular information.



Why communication?

It’s easy to think that children’s speech, language and communication develops no matter what. But this isn’t true.

Speech, language and communication underpins everything we do, yet children don’t learn to talk by accident.

Adults play a really important role in nurturing and supporting these skills. Listening to what children say, giving them ideas and creating opportunities for talk and interaction can make a big difference to children’s ability to live life to the full.

In the UK today over 1 million children and young people have some form of speech, language and communication need. This is at least 2 or 3 children in every classroom - and that's the children we know about. Many of these children will need support to communicate. This may mean adults need to make their talk simpler or give children a bit more time to process information. For some children, it may mean that their speech is unclear, so other people need to listen just a little bit more carefully. They may use fewer words or speak in shorter sentences or may need to use sign language or point to symbols in order to communicate.

There are some children who have lots to say but cannot talk, these children can use a number of different aids to enable them to have a voice. Children can use pictures, symbols or a communication aid, which then speaks for them. Around 0.05% of children need to use these aids, which is about 6,200 children in England.

We would love all children to experience celebrations. For many children with speech, language and communication needs, listening to the vast amount of language that surrounds us can be a daily challenge. Saying what they want or need, explaining something or just sharing their experiences can be hard work. Every day they overcome challenges in communication, so in many ways every day is a day for celebration.

Celebrations often have the power to cut through communication barriers as people can share a smile, a wave, a favourite dish or dance together to music.

Celebrate Special Moments

Celebration in all its many forms is an important part of every child's life. It can be the joy of achievement, a happy moment, a special time, as well as celebrations that occur every year, such as a birthday or Christmas.

Sharing celebrations activities for younger children

Memories and experiences can be recalled and shared using a photograph, an article, a prop, a smell or a taste to stimulate communication. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Parents or carers could bring into nursery or school photographs of special events in their child's life – such as their first birthday or the first time they rode a bicycle. These can be displayed on the wall or in a book kept for each child. Such a book or album could also easily be made at home.
- Make a collection of photos, pictures and objects in a special celebration box. This could include candles, ribbon, cards, balloons, party hats, decorations and pictures of special food. Every time you add to the box after a celebration, explore the items inside, to start a discussion with your child. See what celebrations they can remember and support them if they cannot think of what each item relates to.
- With younger children, create a tea party with teddies or soft toys and discuss what you are celebrating e.g. pretend one teddy is giving a birthday present to another. Use open ended questions to facilitate conversation such as 'I wonder what's inside?'.
- Be as imaginative and silly as you can to develop their creative thinking skills e.g. one teddy can be a nursery teacher and the other becomes an animal. The teacher gives the animal a certificate for being the gentlest, furriest, calmest animal in the world and he runs around with excitement!
- Have a collection of pictures of different groups of people celebrating to talk about e.g. what is their favourite picture and why?

Need a starting point for your activity? Here are a few suggestions:

- Start by using a picture or birthday card, a candle, some flowers or the remembrance of an event, such as the first time you went to the park and went down the slide.
- The adult begins by reminding the children of that time.
- Use the items in the box to stimulate the children to talk about celebrations they have enjoyed and that are special to them.
- Introduce new vocabulary to extend their talk.
- Think about words you might use when you're celebrating, such as 'happy', 'wow', 'exciting', 'surprise', 'laughing', 'smiling', 'hugs'.



When asking the children questions, try to think how you can ask them without the responses being just a yes or no answer. For example –

- What do you think of that?
- What do you think that means?
- Why do you think that?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What would you do if? What does this do?
- What have we thought/ talked about so far?

These will all help children to extend their language. For younger children or children with speech and language difficulties, ask a question and give a choice of possible answers to aid their response e.g. ‘Is it Christmas Day or your birthday in this photo?’

For children with little or no language, comment on what the child is doing rather than questioning them e.g. ‘Wow, cake. You’re eating cake.’ This will model language for the child and not put any pressure on the child to respond. Always give at least 10 seconds for the child to respond.

With older children / young people, you can tailor this activity in the following ways;

- Celebrate special moments using photographs of family, friends, school special occasions or day trips. Encourage children to build a story around the photograph – who was there, where was it, what was the best bit of the day, why was it so enjoyable, what else they might like to do in the future?
- If the activity is done in school – get the children to comment on what they liked best about each other’s stories. Encourage them to comment on how easy it was to follow the story, how enthusiastic the story teller was or how exciting the day sounded.
- Encourage them to keep their own box or photograph album of special things and get them to talk about what they’ve chosen to put in there and why.
- Encourage them to pass on the good news to family and friends – they could Skype Grandparents or send a video over the internet to share their successes.
- Celebrate sporting achievements, such as their first length in swimming, being picked for the team in football and start collecting swimming ribbons, trophies etc.
- Family achievements like them doing jobs at home, cooking the dinner, making a sandwich
- Celebrate independence like the first time they walk to school with friends or first time they have to look after their own money
- If young people (aged 14-19) are interested in learning more in this area, get them to assess their skills and build their strengths as a communicator using BT’s innovative Talk Gym resource www.bt.com/talkgym



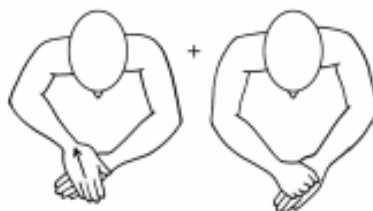
This ‘Sharing celebrations’ activity is based on the work of Sarah Bond and the team at Leicestershire County Council. They have created a Celebrations resource as part of their support of *Hello* available from www.leics.gov.uk/hello_leicestershire_december_celebrations.pdf

Celebrating festivities

Festivities are excellent opportunities for celebration and communication. With Christmas approaching, see if you can use these signs in the lead up to and on Christmas Day.

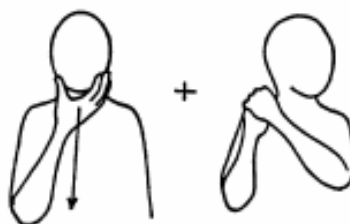
Christmas is coming - Makaton Symbols and Line Drawings of Signs

Christmas



Slide top hand back towards body, close and move back onto left hand

Father Christmas



Mime holding sack over shoulder

Reindeer



Hands move up and out to show antler size

Sleigh



Hands move quickly backwards and forwards together by wrist movement

Toys



Whole formation circles twice

A huge thank you goes to The Makaton Charity who kindly produced this sheet of symbols and signs for you to use and enjoy. If you would like more symbols and signs for Christmas and a range of other topics, please visit The Makaton Charity at www.makaton.org

Makaton Symbols and Signs graphics © The Makaton Charity 2011

Celebrating success

Everyone loves their achievements being acknowledged and a great way of doing this is by giving a certificate. To help you do this at home, in your setting or profession we have devised a certificate that you can amend as you see fit.

For example, you may want to award it to one child for being a 'good friend' for helping their peer. Or at home you may want to award your child for 'Good tidying up in your bedroom'. A Speech and Language Therapist can award a group of children a certificate for completing a six-week block of speech sounds work. No matter what the reason, there are many successes to celebrate.

Mini-awards ceremony

Why not hold a mini-awards ceremony? (This can be adapted for specific age groups)

Early years setting:

- Pick a time of the week or specific day to create certificates for chosen children you feel deserve one.
- At a time when the children are all sitting down, you can have 'Certificate Time'.
- Call out the children's names for them to come up to the front of the group one by one.
- Give them their certificate and say what it is for (add images if you can – e.g. someone sitting on a chair for 'good sitting').
- Encourage the rest of the class to all clap and say after you e.g. 'Well done, Kamil'.

Ideas for adapting current assemblies and celebrations to include Celebrating Communication

Primary School:

- Adapt the current celebrations to reward children for telling a story well, explaining a complicated event well or for using a good word.
- Develop certificates that reflect this and encourage one child to be the teacher, call out the names and hand over the certificates.

Secondary School:

- Students could use art or media lessons to design their own celebration ceremonies, with certificates, music and presentations to celebrate excellent communication in the school.
- Students might want to offer certificates to particular teachers who make their lessons interesting through talk and interaction. They could give certificates to fellow students who argued particularly well in a class debate or ensured groups worked together well in group tasks in school or who have led their team well in sport.

At Home:

- If you have more than one child, you can even hold a mini awards ceremony at home and take some photos.
- You can buy mini plastic trophies or medals from novelty shops that you could also award to your children.
- You could create a little platform from a box for them to stand on for the ceremony!

Celebrating success certificate

The following certificates can be downloaded from the *Hello* website [here](#).

The first certificate is an example of how you can fill the certificate in with your text:



These certificates have been taken from the A Chance to Talk programme and I CAN's Communication Cookbook, www.communicationcookbook.org.uk

Celebrating your communication

Our ability to communicate is what makes us unique. Sharing words with the people around us celebrates our ability to communicate.

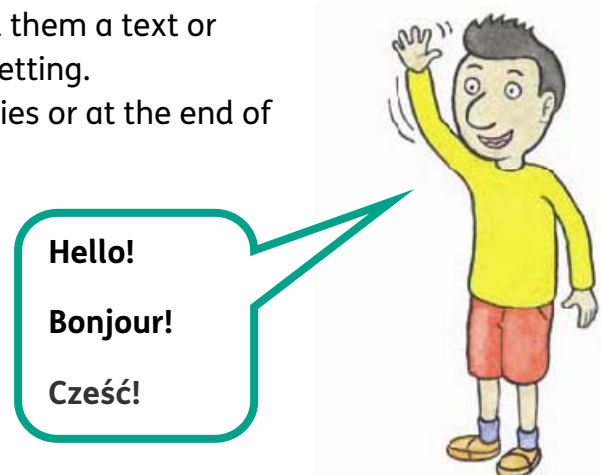
The *Hello Echo* game

This simple but brilliant game encourages celebration of words and communication in all its different forms. It is perfect for schools but could be adapted for other settings.

- The concept is simply getting a head teacher, school governor or school SENCO to walk into a classroom and say '*Hello*' to the teacher.
- The teacher then says '*Hello*' to one of the pupils. Each person in the class then takes it in turn to say '*Hello*' passing the word around the room.
- You are not restricted to having to speak; instead the word can be made in sign language, by pointing to a symbol or writing the word on a blackboard.
- A child does not need to say '*Hello*' in English but can use their home language to say '*Hello*'.
- Once it reaches the last child in the class, they go to the next class and say '*Hello*' to someone there. This carries on until the echo has passed around the whole school.

Things to think about...

1. Plan the day that you are going to run your ***Hello Echo* game**.
2. Plan the order of classes and who is going to start the echo game.
3. If you are using symbols, give yourself time to prepare them or set up electronic communication devices.
4. You could take some photos of the occasion so you can make a *Hello* wall after the event.
5. You could also create a poster with the different ways of saying *Hello* on it i.e. a photo of a child waving, a symbol and the different languages children communicate in. This can then be put on display in the school, maybe in reception for all to see.
6. You can make the echo as big as you want by partnering with other schools or businesses around you. Simply give them a call or send them a text or email '*Hello*' when you are finished in your setting.
7. You could involve parents in school assemblies or at the end of the day pass on '*Hello*' to them.



The '*Hello Echo* Game' was created by Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust and Speech and Language Therapy Service. 9,358 children and 1,136 adults across 44 different schools in the county took part.

Celebrating People

Get children to celebrate the friends and family that are important to them. Not only will they have lots of fun but it will also develop their talking and listening skills.

The Special Person game

The Special Person game can be played at home, at school or in early years settings.

- One person is chosen and they go out of the room.
- Everyone in the group thinks of one positive thing they would like to tell that special person.
- The person comes back in and the children take it in turns to give them a compliment.
- Once everyone has spoken, go around the circle and repeat them all saying 'So now we know more about each other, we know that Jenny likes Samir's hair...'



For older children, the game can be adapted to use the modern technology they use regularly. For example, they could:

- Text a loving word or message to a member of their family.
- Leave a positive comment or compliment on a friend's Facebook page or send them a message saying something you like about them.
- If they're really tech-savvy, record a short video praising a friend and post it on their social networking site. They could then ask the person they have chosen to pass on a message to someone else.

Stop and think – words can hurt

November is also 'anti-bullying month' with the theme 'Stop and think - words can hurt'. It is a good opportunity for older children to learn how to express positive messages about the people in their lives and also to see the damage they can do with negative words.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance has produced a Briefing Pack aimed at various educational settings and this can be downloaded here

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying_week_2011/briefing_pack.aspx

Celebrating your city

A key way to get children to communicate is to provide something to trigger a conversation, and this can be as simple as looking around their home town or city. Everyone has a favourite place/s or thing about where they live.

There is always something going on and as you are travelling around with children, it is a good opportunity to ask them questions and get them talking.



Here are some ideas for ways to use your town or city to encourage and celebrate communication:

- As an activity in class, get the children to bring in a picture of themselves with their favourite monument or building in town. They can explain to the rest of the class what the monument is and why they like it.
- They could create a collage of all the pictures and then write a sentence each about what their picture shows.
- Encourage staff and children to go on outings around the city and promote these to parents. You could arrange a class trip around the town or city and encourage the children to discuss what they have seen, and which bit of town they like the most and why – take photos as you go.
- Encourage staff to facilitate small ‘talk’ groups for children to chat in a relaxed environment about the city / town.
- Get staff to set up opportunities for children to record their ideas by drawing, painting etc and staff can write down exactly what children said.
- For older children, focus more on the history of the town. Get them to do some research and then share some ‘Did You Know’ facts with the rest of the class.
- Each child could be given a ‘Talking Button’ so they can record a sentence starting ‘I like (insert town name) because...’
- Give children a sentence starter which says ‘I like my town because...’
- Older children could interview a parent, teacher or friend and find out what they liked about the town/city when they were young and report it back to the class.



Thank you goes to Nicky Walters and the team at Plymouth City Council for providing this great activity.

Celebrating diversity

In early years settings and schools, there are many children for whom English is an additional language. Language in all its diversity is a wonderful and positive thing. For example, research has shown that children who grow up bilingual have better brain function than children with only one language. As people get older, being bilingual even protects them from Alzheimer's disease! So this is something to celebrate.

Talking Buttons activity

One way to celebrate children's culture and language is to use a fantastic gadget called a 'Talking Button' (see page 15 for a list of suppliers). It is a small recording device, which records for about 20 seconds.

- Each child gets to take a Talking Button home and record a member of their family – a parent, sibling, uncle or aunt or grandparent – saying 'Hello'* in their native language.
- The teacher would then take one at random and play it for the class.
- The child would then stand up, explain which language it was and then teach the word to the rest of the class.
- If you only have a few Talking Buttons, you could pick a couple of children to take them home each day so everyone gets a chance to take part.



This gives the children a chance to not only improve their speaking and listening skills, but to also learn something from a new language.

Show and Tell activity

Additionally, you could arrange for the children to each bring in something which relates to their home culture, along with the Talking Button. This could be an item of clothing, a type of food, a photo of a celebration from their culture or even a favourite book.

You could then run a 'Show and Tell' session where each child explains a bit about their item and why it's relevant for their culture.

Once a child has identified a played Talking Button as theirs and taught their peers the word, they can:

- 'Show and Tell' what they have brought in linked to their home culture and talk about this (or name it if they have less language). They can say what it means to them and why they choose it to show to others.
- Children can take it in turns to put their object/s and Talking Button in an area of your setting, which is dedicated to a different home culture each week.
- Other children in the group from that culture can also then bring in related items, to show and tell and share with their peers throughout the week.

*You can match what you want children to record to their level of language development. For example, they could record a sentence such as, 'Hello, how are you?' if able.

Understanding the needs of children learning English as an additional language

Lots of research shows that supporting the development of the home language will enhance the learning of English. When children are learning to talk and understand, parents and carers should talk to their child in the language in which they themselves feel most confident and comfortable. It's important too for the child to have opportunities to use their first language in their nursery or school.

Here is some more helpful guidance for parents and carers:

- Don't be concerned about mixing languages within a sentence, when you talk to your child.
- Speak in your chosen language/s to your child even if he or she responds in a different language. If a child responds, this shows that the message has been understood.
- It's OK for children to speak in their home language and mix languages in one sentence.

Here is some interesting information for all those who work with children and young people learning English as an additional language:

- It can take around two years for a child to develop an additional language adequate for communication and social interaction. However, it can take longer (six years or more) to fully master the more formal 'academic' language needed for school learning.
- Children learning an additional language commonly go through a natural process referred to as a 'silent period' where they may say nothing for several months. This is perfectly normal.



Thanks to the London SIG Bilingualism for advice on English as an additional language.

www.londonsigbilingualism.co.uk

Helpful Links

Below are links to resources and information that will help you celebrate communication in all its forms, plus a number of signposts to information which support children with an additional language.

Talk to your Baby

www.literacytrust.org.uk/talk_to_your_baby/resources/418_q#bilingual

Helps children learn to talk. Includes top tips related to bilingualism in 14 languages.

NALDIC

www.naldic.org.uk/docs/resources/index.cfm

The website of the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum. They have a number of links, frequently asked questions, key documents and case studies for working with children who have English as an additional language.

Talking Point

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

The first stop online for information on children's communication. If you are concerned about a child, you can use the progress checker. You can also find your nearest speech and language therapy services using the postcode searchable database.

ESL Printables

www.eslprintables.com

A website where English Language teachers exchange resources: worksheets, lesson plans, activities, etc.

British Council

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>

LearnEnglish Kids has fun, free online games, activities plus more for children to learn English.

Signalong

www.signalong.org.uk

Information about communicating without words, using signs and symbols.

Southwark PCT NHS Speech and Language Therapy Service

www.southwarkpct.nhs.uk/a/398

Have a page dedicated to the topic of 'Keeping your language Alive' and is in a range of languages.

ESL Flashcards

www.eslflashcards.com

ESL flashcards provides hundreds of flashcards which can be used to boost a child's vocabulary and inspire discussion.

Communication Matters

www.communicationmatters.org.uk

The Communication Matters website includes information on methods of communication which can be used to supplement the more usual methods of speech and writing.

Collaborative Learning Project

www.collaborativelearning.org

The Collaborative Learning Project is a teacher network to promote inclusive education. It develops and disseminates accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

Widgit

www.widgit.com/101ideas/hello/index.htm

CENMAC are working with Widgit to create inclusive Widgit Symbol resources to support the monthly themes of *Hello*. These resources are all available to download for free!

London Bilingualism SIG

www.londonsigbilingualism.co.uk

Aimed at Speech and Language therapists, this website would also be of use to parents and a range of professionals. There is information on bilingual language development theory, culture, language development, assessment and intervention.

NAPLIC

www.naplic.org.uk

NAPLIC exists to promote and increase the awareness and understanding of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, amongst all the professionals involved in meeting their needs.

Bilingualism.co.uk

www.bilingualism.co.uk

Site aims to be a resource for speech and language therapy professionals who wish to deliver therapy in the medium of mother tongue / home language.

Speech Therapy

www.speechtherapy.co.uk

This site will provide links, information and discussion forums for Speech and Language Therapists, associated medical and educational professionals, as well as resources for those affected by communication disabilities and their families.

Talking Buttons

Talking Buttons are devices that hold a little single message recording. You can get them from a number of suppliers, below are some links.

www.talkingproducts.com/recordable-cards-gifts/recordable-greetings-cards-gifts/talking-cards.html?__store=rec

www.inclusive.co.uk/talking-button-p2107

To keep up to date with all *Hello* campaign developments, visit and bookmark www.hello.org.uk

For information relating to children's communication, visit and bookmark www.talkingpoint.org.uk

Hello is managed by The Communication Trust in partnership with the Office of the Communication Champion. *Hello* is sponsored by BT and Pearson Assessment.



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