Getting Ready for Speech!

Before children can start to learn speech sounds, they need to be ready!
The following games and activities can be used to help improve early listening skills and to make children aware of the sounds they can hear around them, which will help to learn to speak clearly later on.
Remember to keep the activities fun – it's often better to keep activities short to start with.

Listening for sounds:
When you're out and about, listen to what you can hear together e.g. 'can you hear the birds singing?' Talk about the sounds – are they quiet sounds? Noisy sounds? See if you can try and make the same sounds yourselves! Later, see how many sounds your child can remember.

With their eyes closed, ask your child to identify different everyday noises e.g. clock ticking, coins rattling, squeaky toys, paper rustling, kettle boiling etc.

Same / different: Make two sounds (or for slightly older children say two words) and ask them to tell you if two sounds or words are the same or different, or whether they are long or short.

Actions to sounds games
Create games where, for example, they run when they hear one sound, and jump when they hear another. This is lots of fun to make up different actions together, and works really well with more than one child too!

Have fun making **"symbolic sounds"** together (sounds that mean something) – animal noises, transport noises, and fun sounds such as "uh-oh" when something falls on the floor, or "mmmmm!" when your food is nice. These sounds are really interesting to listen to and fun to copy.

Copying games
Don't worry about speech sounds to begin with, if a child is finding speech difficult, it may be easier to learn the skills separately.
Have fun looking in a mirror and pulling faces, or a big mirror with big dance moves! – can you copy each other?
Clap in simple sequences and then ask your child to copy the sequence. Try fast, slow, stop-starts to make it fun and encourage good listening!

Have lots of fun singing nursery rhymes and action rhymes together!