

## A guide about word finding difficulties in children

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### What is word finding difficulty?

Sometimes children have trouble thinking of the word they want to say whilst they are talking.

Children with this difficulty may:

- use the wrong word e.g. says playstation when they mean television
- muddle up the sounds in words, e.g. say “sceletope” when they mean “telescope”
- seem to have a word “on the tip of their tongue” but can’t quite remember it, and might use “thingy” or “you know” instead.

### Why is it important?

Word finding difficulty can make it difficult for the child:

- to get their message across clearly
- to get their message across quickly
- to remember what they want to say while they are trying to think of a word.

### How you can help

- If your child uses the wrong word, help them to think about the difference between the word they used and the word they wanted to use. For example, if they used “lion” for tiger, explain that “it’s like a lion but it’s stripy”.
- If your child muddles up sounds in long words, help him to practise the word. Say the word slowly and clearly for them and ask them to repeat it until they are able to say it correctly.
- If the child is struggling to think of a word, encourage them to describe the word they are thinking of.

### You can also help by playing the following games with your child:

- “Give us a clue” or 20 questions.
- “What is it?” Put a number of small objects into a bag and ask your child to choose one and to describe it for you to guess. If the object they chose was a banana they could describe it:
  - By giving the category name: “it’s a fruit”.
  - By telling you what it looks like: “it’s yellow, long and thin”.
  - By telling you where we find it: “it grows on trees in hot countries”.
  - By telling you what we do with it: “you can eat it”.
- Help your child to think about which is the most important information to give.
- Note down during the week the long words which your child has difficulty saying. At the end of each week, look through the list and practise them again with them. This will help fix them in their memory.

### Further information

The following websites have further information for parents and staff:

[www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby)

[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)



## Contact us

Please contact your Speech and Language Therapy Department if you have any queries or concerns regarding the information in this leaflet.

**Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley**

**Phone:** 01474 360685

**Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks**

**Phone:** 01732 376814 or 0300 123 7004

**Maidstone and Malling**

**Phone:** 01622 742326

**Canterbury, coastal, Thanet and rural Swale**

**Phone:** 0300 123 8112

Or visit [www.kentcht.nhs.uk](http://www.kentcht.nhs.uk) and follow the link to Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy.

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