



## How to start teaching kids English at home

### How do I start teaching my kids English at home?

Many parents would like to teach their children English at home, but don't know how to start. It doesn't matter if your own English is not perfect. The most important thing is that you are enthusiastic and that you give your children lots of encouragement and praise. Your child will pick up on your enthusiasm for the language. Don't worry if your child doesn't start speaking English immediately. They will need a certain amount of time to absorb the language. Be patient, and they will begin to speak English in their own time.

### Establishing a routine

Establish a routine for your English time at home. It is better to have short, frequent sessions than long, infrequent ones. Fifteen minutes is enough for very young children. You can gradually make sessions longer as your child gets older and their concentration span increases. Keep the activities short and varied in order to hold your child's attention.

Try to do certain activities at the same time every day. Children feel more comfortable and confident when they know what to expect. For example, you could play an English game every day after school, or read an English story with your children before bedtime. If you have space at home, you can create an English corner where you keep anything connected to English, for example books, games, DVDs or things that your children have made. Repetition is essential – children often need to hear words and phrases many times before they feel ready to produce them themselves.

### Playing games

Children learn naturally when they are having fun. Flashcards are a great way to teach and revise vocabulary and there are many different games which you can play with flashcards, such as [Memory](#), Kim's game, Snap or Happy Families.

You can find free downloadable [flashcards](#) on a wide range of topics on our website.

There are many other types of games you can play with your children to help them practise English.

- Action games – for example Simon says, Charades, What's the time Mr Wolf?
- Board games – Snakes and ladders, other traditional games
- Word games – e.g. I spy, Hangman
- Online games – you could finish your English time with an [online game](#) from LearnEnglish Kids.



### **Using everyday situations**

The advantage of teaching English at home is that you can use everyday situations and real objects from around the house to practise the language naturally and in context. For example:

- Talk about clothes when your child is getting dressed, or when you are sorting laundry ('Let's put on your blue socks', 'It's Dad's T-shirt', etc.).
- Practise vocabulary for toys and furniture when you are helping your child to tidy their bedroom ('Let's put your teddy bear on the bed!', 'Where is the blue car?').
- Teach food vocabulary when you are cooking or going shopping. When you go to the supermarket, give your child a list of things to find (use pictures or words depending on their age). Revise the vocabulary when you put the shopping away at home.

### **Using stories**

Younger children love books with bright colours and attractive illustrations. Look at the pictures together and say the words as you point to the pictures. Later you can ask your child to point to different things, e.g. 'Where's the cat?' After a while encourage them to say the words by asking 'What's that?' Listening to stories will get your child used to the sounds and rhythms of English.

The animated [stories](#) on LearnEnglish Kids are an excellent way for children to develop listening and reading skills. Older children can complete the accompanying downloadable activities to check understanding.

### **Using songs**

Songs are a really effective way to learn new words and improve pronunciation. Songs with actions are particularly good for very young children as they are able to join in even if they are not yet able to sing the song. The actions often demonstrate the meaning of the words in the song.

There are many fun, animated [songs](#) on LearnEnglish Kids which you can listen to with your children.

### **Teaching grammar**

With younger children, there is no need to explicitly teach grammar rules, but instead get them used to hearing and using different grammatical structures in context, for example 'have got' when you are talking about someone's appearance, or 'must/mustn't' when talking about their school rules. Hearing the grammar being used in context from an early age will help your child to use it naturally and correctly when they are older.



For older children, you can use the [grammar section](#) on LearnEnglish Kids. Videos, quizzes and games help kids to learn in a fun, relaxed way.

It can be very useful for older children to teach their siblings or other family members. Explaining how to use grammar to someone else helps you to master it yourself.

### **Which words and phrases should I teach first?**

Consider your child's interests and personality when deciding which topics to teach, and let your child help you to choose. You may like to start with some of these topics:

- numbers (1–10; 10–20; 20–100)
- colours
- adjectives (e.g. big, small, tall, happy, sad, tired)
- the body
- toys
- clothes
- animals (e.g. pets, farm animals, wild animals)
- food

You can find lots of fun activities on a huge range of [topics](#) on LearnEnglish Kids.

It is also important for your child to get used to 'English time' language, so use the same phrases with your child each time, e.g. 'It's English time! Let's sit down. Which song shall we start with today?' Children will soon pick up phrases such as please; thank you; Can I have ...?; Where is ...?; Point to ...; What colour is it?; It's ...; I like ...; I don't like ....

Whatever your approach, the most important thing is to relax, have fun and make learning English an enjoyable experience for both you and your child.

Read this article online <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/parents/articles/how-start-teaching-kids-english-home>

---

Contributed by Jo Blackmore, LearnEnglish Kids team

---