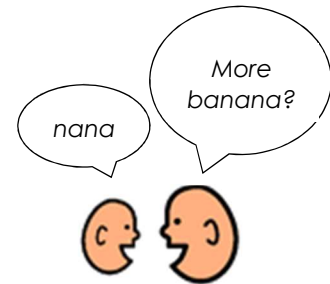# Joining words

Once your child is using enough single words, you can support them to combine words into short phrases. Don't worry about how clear your child's speech is at this stage. They may use a limited range of speech sounds or may miss off the ends of words. Focus on joining words together and just repeat back how the words should sound.

General strategies for joining words together:

- Simple language. Try to match your language to your child's level, plus one or two words. For example, if your child uses single words, use a two word phrase. Keeping your language short and simple provides a model that is easier to copy.

  Try to use more comments than questions as you play together and make comments during your everyday routines.

- Pause and wait. Your child may need extra time to organise their thoughts and plan what they are going to say. Pause and wait for your child to speak first. Slow down your own talking and give your child plenty of thinking time.

- Copy and add. Repeat to affirm what your child has said, and add a word to expand on this and to model a short phrase.

  e.g.   Child: 'Car.'
         Adult: 'Yes, *blue* car.' or 'Daddy's car'.
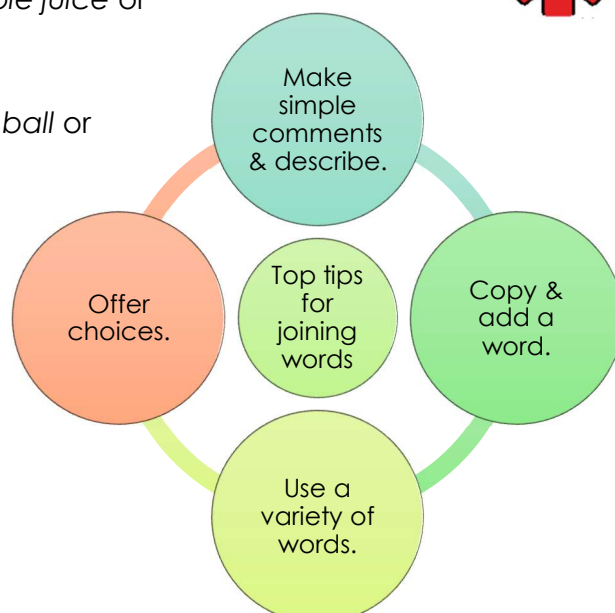
- Repeat. Use repetition to emphasise your model.

  e.g.   Child: 'Baby.'
         Adult: 'Baby's sleeping. Shh baby's sleeping. Night-night baby.'

- Offer choices. Offering choices can be another good way to model a phrase for your child to copy.

  e.g.   Child: 'Juice.'
         Adult: 'Do you want… *apple juice* or *orange juice*?'

         Child: 'Ball.'
         Adult: 'Will we... *throw the ball* or *roll the ball*?'

Make simple comments & describe.

Top tips for joining words

Copy & add a word.

Offer choices.

Use a variety of words.

- Model a variety of words. As well as object names, we need different kinds of words to be able to combine words together. Words such as 'no', 'more', 'all-gone' are helpful when starting to join words (e.g. 'Juice… *More* juice'). Some other ideas are suggested below.

Action words – *eat, drink, sleep, run, wash, etc.*

e.g.   Child: 'Bubbles.'
        Adult: '*Blow* bubbles.' Or '*Pop* bubbles'.

Describing words – *big, yellow, hot, cold, dirty, etc.*

e.g.   Child: 'Dog.'
        Adult: '*Big* dog.' Or '*Brown* dog'.

Position words – *in, on, up, down, etc.*

Social words – *bye-bye, night-night, etc.*

People's names – *Mummy's, my, Peppa, etc.*