

Jumbled words?!



Some people cringe when they hear the word 'grammar' or maybe it might bring back childhood memories learning about nouns, verbs, adjectives and sentence structure! Although grammar is not something we all love, it is important that accurate grammar is used when we speak and write, otherwise it may lead to misunderstandings or difficulty in communicating ideas.

Grammar refers to the rules and word structures we use to form sentences. Each language will have different grammatical rules. In English it can include concepts such as pronouns (eg. he, she, they), plurals, past and future tenses, adding '-ing' to the end of words and using 'little' words such as 'is, are, has'.

Generally by 4 years of age, a child's sentences should be correct most of the time and should be at least 4-5 words in length. They should also begin to be using some joining words such as *and* or *because*. If your child's words are a bit mixed up or sentences just don't make sense, it may be that they are having difficulties with grammar. Some common errors that child make include:

- Confusing pronouns *I/me, he/she* and *his/her* (eg. *me hungry, her got a shoe*)
- Missing out "little" words such as *is, are, has, am* (eg. *He swimming, it big*)
- Difficulties with plurals (eg. *dog vs dogs*)
- Mixing up past, present and future tense, or only able to talk about things that are happening right now
- Confusion with irregular verbs which don't follow the normal 'rules' (eg. *He eated instead of he ate*)
- Not using joining words such as *and, because, before, after, then*.

Note that many of the above errors should not continue past 4-5 years of age. If they do continue, then these errors may impact on a child's ability to write sentences and stories accurately once they begin school.

If you're concerned about your child's speech or language development, contact a speech pathologist to discuss whether assessment for your child is indicated.

What can I do to help?

You can help your child by modeling back to them how a sentence should sound. You can use your voice to place emphasis on the corrected words to draw attention to it. For example:

Child says: Sam climbing
Adult: yes, Sam is climbing up the tree.

Sometimes you may need to draw more attention to it and teach your child how it should be said. For example:

Child says: Her is wearing glasses (pointing to the boy)
Adult: oh you mean the boy? Yes he is wearing glasses. A boy is called a *he*, so we can say *he* is wearing glasses.

It can sometimes be helpful to ask your child to copy how you said it to give them practice saying the sentence accurately. Often though, a child will need to hear the correct sentence and practice it lots of times before they get it correct.



Marion Langdon
Paediatric Speech Pathologist

0402 070 299
kidsinthehills.sp@gmail.com

PO Box 397, Ferny Hills DC Qld 4055
Ferny Fair Shopping Centre,
170 Patricks Rd, Ferny Hills

www.kidsinthehillsspeech.com
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