PLAYING COMPUTER GAMES



Having a conversation about something that your child enjoys and that motivates them is a brilliant way to develop their skills and playing computer games is something that most children love doing. Playing games together can be a successful way to develop speech and language skills and your child probably won't even see it as speech and language practice. Adding an element of competition really motivates children and they will love the idea of trying to beat you. Here are some ways to use playing computer games to develop speech and language skills:

- While playing, talk about what your child is doing and what you are doing, providing a model of language for them. For example, commenting on what is happening in the game "You jumped over that huge fire" or "I'm building a big tower next to the road". This will help to encourage them to talk to you about what they are doing.
- Tell your child that you have never played this game before (or you can't remember how to play) and ask them to explain to you what you have to do. You may need to ask them questions to ensure that they give you enough information to understand e.g. "I'm not sure what I do with this button" or "How do I jump?"
- Playing games can be a great way to develop your child's understanding of different concept words, especially if there is a race or element of competition involved. You can model words such as 'first', 'last', 'before' and 'after' and using these words lots of times in the context of a game will help your child to understand and use the words themselves.
- Computer games often have their own language or different words which you can ask your child to explain to you. Encourage them to talk about what the word means including key information such as what type of thing it is, where you find it, what it looks like and the sounds in the word. This can help support the development of their vocabulary skills.
- Encourage your child to make up their own story of what the characters could do. You could act this out using role play, draw or create a comic strip of your ideas. Your child could create their own computer game, including the characters, locations and tasks or adventures that they might do.

It is really important to make sure that there is a balance of screen time and other activities during the day. Ensure that your child has a balance of activities including exercise, face to face interactions and that they are getting enough sleep. It is important that screen time is not used at least an hour before bedtime as this can make it more difficult for children to get to sleep.