



Bedfordshire
Community
Health Services



Speech

Use of
Language

Understanding
of Language

Play and
Interaction Skills

Attention and
Listening Skills

Lift off to Language for 3-5's

A Language Booster group programme for 3-5 year olds

A Lift off to Language Practitioners Guide

Developed by
NHS Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Service, Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire adult and children's community health services are provided in partnership by
East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT) and Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) NHS Trust



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Lift off to Language

As early years professionals we are all aware of the growing number of children entering school without the necessary speech, language and communication skills to access the curriculum. Lift off to Language is a programme to support the development of children's Communication and Language within the Early Years environment. This programme aims to have a long term impact by empowering nursery staff, to run regular language booster groups within early year's settings.

A focus on communication is vital in every early years setting where children can play, learn and interact. This demands a skilled workforce who can give children lots of practice to become excellent communicators.

The programme supports the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) themes and principles. It is essential that for the **Unique Child** the need for additional support is identified.

To establish **Positive Relationships** boundaries should be clear and the child's needs, feelings and interests responded to. The **Enabling Environment** should provide rich learning opportunities. To foster **Learning and Development** children's individual learning needs should be identified and planned for.

"Communication is an essential life skill. It is the basis on which all children learn, achieve and make friends. It is vital to the development of children's social and emotional wellbeing". (Bercow report, 2008)

Please note:

This trained practitioner guide should:

- Only be used by the individual who is trained to run the programme
- Not be shared or given to other practitioners not trained to run the programme.



Overview

Why run language groups?

Language booster groups help to prevent difficulties from escalating to the point of needing specialist intervention. The sessions provide an opportunity to provide focussed support on Communication and Language to children within the environment that they are secure and comfortable in. Lift off to Language groups develop a wide range of Communication and Language skills:

- children's attention and listening skills
- children's social awareness of others
- children's confidence levels
- children's ability to initiate and participate in conversation with their peers
- children's ability to follow instructions at a 2 or more word level
- breadth of vocabulary including verbs, prepositions and adjectives
- children's ability to produce target speech sounds

What is Lift Off to Language?

Lift off to Language is a programme of 6 sessions each lasting approximately 20 minutes. It is advised that the group consists of 4-6 children. The group provides the opportunity to target children's social interactions, turn taking skills, comprehension and expressive language skills.

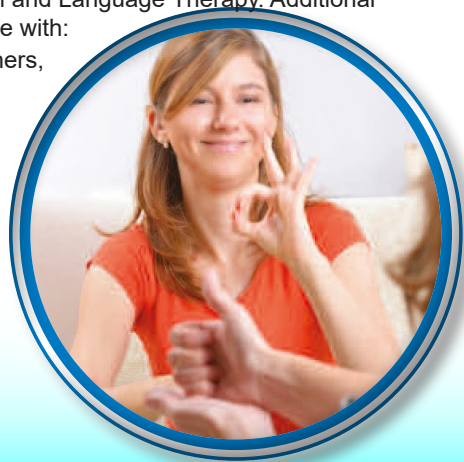
The programme supports the development of children's comprehension and expression of various concepts i.e. prepositions, opposites and categories of vocabulary i.e. animals, clothes. Activities within the sessions can be selected dependent on the area of need with the children's Communication and Language skills.

Which children would benefit?

The programme is aimed at children aged 3-5 years of age (up to the end of Foundation Stage). Some settings and schools have successfully used it with some targeted Year 1 children.

Lift off to Language incorporates a preventative as well as targeted approach to enhancing Communication and Language skills. It is not just targeted on children who are specifically delayed in Speech and Language or receiving Speech and Language Therapy. Additional children to incorporate into the group may include those with:

- social difficulties i.e. lack of awareness of others, prefers to play alone, difficulty initiating interaction with others
- attention difficulties
- difficulties taking turns
- English as an Additional Language
- speech sound difficulties
- limited language skills (may be using signs to communicate)
- shy, quieter children



Considerations

1. How many children should I have in the group?

The group should consist of 4-6 children, 6 children is the recommended limit.

2. Do the children need to do all 6 sessions?

Yes keep the same children in the group for the 6 weeks. This supports their development within the group and allows the children to make progress.

3. How often should I run the group?

At a minimum the group should be run once a week with the same group of children. Have a regular time each week that you run the group. The programme is flexible and so can be run twice a week for 6 weeks (2 sessions a week) or you could run the group twice week for 6 weeks with a different set of children.

4. Which children should I choose for the group?

A list of suitable children is suggested in the 'Which children would benefit?' section however do think carefully about the combination of children you are putting together. It can be helpful to have a child that is a good role model within the group to balance out those that find listening or communicating difficult.

5. Can children do the programme again?

Absolutely, some children benefit from repetition of the activities and continued small group support.

6. Where should I run the group?

Find a quiet area, this may be a separate room or if this isn't possible then block an area of the room off to run the group in. It is also important to keep the area free of visual distractions i.e. bright colours, posters etc. This will support the children's attention and listening during the group time.

7. What do I need for the group?

Getting ready for the session is really important. Prepare the resources you need beforehand. It can be useful to have a lift off to Language resource box. Before you go and get the children set out the area with mats /cushions/carpet squares in a circle (1 for each child and adult), stick up the visual schedule and have your resources ready. This allows the children to come, sit down and be ready to listen straight away.

8. Should we tell the parents/ carers we're running lift off to language?

Yes, it's good practice to tell the parents/carers you are running the groups and also promotes the good work that they setting is doing to support Communication and Language. A sample letter is included in the appendices.



How does Lift off to Language support the Building Blocks of Communication?

The building blocks of communication show how a child learns language, starting with the foundation skills of attention and listening. This supports how the Lift off to Language programme is structured.

Buildings Blocks of Communication Development



Communication encompasses the systems that we use to convey all our meanings.

Linking Lift off to Language to the Building Blocks of Communication

Attention and Listening

The attention and listening games ensure that the child's foundations for learning language are well developed.

Play and Interaction

There are many opportunities for the children to interact with staff and with their peers during the session.

Understanding of Language

Children will be able to understand a word or concept before being able to use it expressively.

Use of Language

The programme offers children opportunities to extend their vocabulary.

Speech

Children's early phonological awareness is developed through listening to sounds and rhyme.



How does the programme link to EYFS Prime Areas of Learning?

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Making Relationships

- 30-50 months Demonstrates friendly behaviour, initiating conversations and forming good relationships with peers and familiar adults.
- 40-60+ months Initiates conversations, attends to and takes account of what others say.

Self Confidence & Self Awareness

- 30-50 months Is more outgoing towards unfamiliar people and more confident in new social situations.
- 30-50 months Confident to talk to other children when playing, and will communicate freely about own home and community.
- 30-50 months Welcomes and values praise for what they have done.
- 40-60+ months Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions

Managing Feelings & Behaviour

- 30-50 months Begins to accept the needs of others and can take turns and share resources, sometimes with support from others.
- 40-60+ months Aware of the boundaries set, and of behavioural expectations.

Communication and Language

Listening & Attention

- 30-50 months Listens to others one to one or in small groups, when conversation interests them.
- 30-50 months Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories
- 40-60+ months Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly during appropriate activity.

Understanding

- 30-50 months Understands use of objects (e.g. "What do we use to cut things?")
- 30-50 months Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture
- 30-50 months Responds to simple instructions, e.g. to get or put away an object.
- 40-60+ months Responds to a sequence involving a 2 part instruction

Speaking

- 30-50 months Builds up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences.
- 30-50 months Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences.
- 40-60+ months Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words

Physical development

Moving & Handling

- 30-50 months Moves freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways, such as slithering, shuffling, rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, skipping, sliding and hopping.
- 40-60 months Experiments with different ways of moving



Lift Off to Language: Planning the Group Sessions

The planning proforma form is in Appendix 1. This should be completed before the beginning of each session to help you plan what resources you need, activities you are going to run and the structure of the group.

The planning form allows for some flexibility within the session for you to select activities that are suitable for the group of children.

The activity schedule shows how the group should be structured and ordered:

- 1. Visual Schedule** - Discuss visual schedule (a picture representing each activity should be used) which is stuck up near the children and introduce activities for the session (See Appendix 8).
- 2. Golden Reminders** - Use a bear/puppet or other soft toy to stick on the reminders. As the weeks progress ask the children to remember the rules (See Appendix 2).
- 3. Roll the Ball** - Sing the song until all of the children have had a turn.
- 4. Attention and listening OR Rhyme game** - Select one activity from the list (See Appendix 3).
- 5. Concept game** - Select one activity from the list (See Appendix 4).
- 6. Categorisation game** - Select one activity from the list (See Appendix 5). Write on the planning form a) what category the vocabulary is from i.e. clothes and b) what the activity is.
- 7. Train Song** - Adult stands up and moves around singing: 'The train is on the track, the train is on the track, chug, chug, chug, chug, the train is on the track' (to the tune 'The Farmers' in his den'). The adult chooses a child to join the train, sing again, the child chooses another child to come.
- 8. Bear Hug** - Bear is happy that the children have done so well, he would like a hug to say thank you.



Once the activities have been chosen then complete the sections on the form labelled:

- **Resources Needed:**
Write on the form what resources you need to help you make sure you don't forget anything.
- **Vocabulary Focus:**
Include what specific vocabulary you are including in the session i.e. in, on, and under, hot and cold.



Top Tips for Practitioners



- Allow each child a turn.
- Allow each child time to respond. Count to 10 in your head after asking a question.
- Slow your pace down to set the pace of the group.
- Use lots of positive praise throughout.
- Use an animated tone of voice and facial expression.
- Use open questions rather than closed which require only a yes/no answer.
- If a child gets up, is fidgeting or distracting other children silently go and get them, bring them back or silently place your hand on their leg or arm and carry on. Don't verbally acknowledge the distracting behaviour.
- If a child doesn't answer then allow them time to respond then try giving them a forced alternative i.e. over or under, red or blue. If still no response then model the word clearly to them and move on.
- If the child responds quietly praise them and repeat it louder to the rest of the group.
- Mix standing up and sitting down activities when planning your session.
- Keep your resources covered up or in a basket or hoop so that the children know not to touch them or be distracted by them.

Final Checks

- Send out letters to the parents of the children in the group.
- Take time to practice and run through the session plans.
- Plan and gather your resources.
- Find a quiet area away from the other children.
- Run the sessions!!



Evaluating the Group

Each child attending the group will need an individual progress record sheet.

At the end of each group write the date of the session and a short summary of the child's progress that group. This may include participation, attention span, words said, concepts understood etc.

At the end of the 6 weeks complete a short summary of the child's progress for evidence of impact of the programme and self reflection. Once completed the progress record could be kept in the child's learning journey file. Specific areas of progress can also be tracked on their EYFSP profile. See links to EYFS Prime Areas of Learning on page 7 and 8 for areas covered by the programme.

Annual Evaluation/Monitoring

Every practitioner running the Lift off to Language programme will be asked to complete a short evaluation form each year (end of Summer Term) by a Speech and Language Therapist. This enables the Speech and Language Therapy team to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the programme.



References

The Bercow Report:

A review of services for children and young people (0-19) with speech, language and communication needs (2008)

Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012)

The Cost to the Nation of Children's Poor Communication, ICAN (2006)

Additional Reading on Speech, Language and Communication

Developing Language and Communication Skills through Effective Small Group Work. Spirals: from 3-8. Edition 3 (2011) Marion Nash, Jackie Lowe and Tracey Palmer

Better Communication: Shaping Speech, Language and Communication services for children and young people (2011)

Independent review of the teaching of early reading (Rose Review), Jim Rose (2006)
Foundations in Quality, Cathy Nutbrown (2012)

Early Intervention- Next steps (2011) Graham Allen

Speech, Language and Communication needs and the Early Years, ICAN (2009)

Ready to Read: Read on, Get on. Save the Children 2015

Early Years: valuable ends and effective means. Grauberg, J. (July 2014)



Appendix



Lift Off to Language Planning Proforma



Week _____ Date _____

Member of staff running the group _____

Staff planning the group (teacher and TA) _____

Names of children attending the group _____

Resources needed _____

Activities

1. Visual Schedule	Discuss visual schedule and introduce activities for the session
2. Golden Reminders	Ask the children to remember the rules
3. Roll the Ball	'Roll the ball, roll the ball, roll the ball to (name). (name) has got the ball, roll it back to (staff member)'
4. Attention and Listening or Rhyme game	Activity:
5. Concept Game	Activity:
6. Categorisation Game	Category: Activity:
7. Train Song	'The train is on the track, the train is on the track, chug, chug, chug, chug, the train is on the track' to the tune 'The Farmer's in his den'
8. Bear Hug	Bear is happy that the children have done so well, he would like a hug to say thank you.

Individual Child Progress Records completed: Yes/ No



Golden Reminders



Please print and laminate stars.

Attach to teddy as you teach the children the rules.

On ear - good listening

On head - good thinking

On eye - good looking

On mouth - good talking

On hand - good taking turns

On foot - good walking



Attention and Listening Activities

Choose a different activity for each week of your group. Consider repeating activities for children where necessary.

1. Read the children a story book and they have to listen out for a main characters name or a sound, when they hear this they could stand up/wave a flag.
2. Play a beat using rhythm sticks or a drum, ask the children to copy the beat.
3. Hide some instruments behind a barrier (e.g. a box or board). Play one of the instruments. Remove the box/board and the children must say which one it was.
4. Give each child and adult an instrument. The children have to wait for 'go' before they can play the instrument. Say 'Ready, Steady.... Go', let the children play for a few seconds then say 'stop'. Repeat this a few times.
5. Give each child and adult an instrument. Play instruments loudly and quietly and the children have to follow suit.
6. Call out characteristics of the children, if they have that characteristic they must stand up. E.g. "Stand up if you have brown hair!", "Stand up if you have a yellow jumper!"
7. Put an object that makes a noise in a material bag, let the child shake or touch the bag and listen to the noise. What is inside?
8. Sing this song to the tune of 'Bobby Shaftoe': Clap your hands and wriggle your fingers x 3.
Now we've made a pattern!
(Repeat with different actions e.g. Touch your nose and wave your arms/stamp your feet and rub your tummy)
9. Play musical statues!
10. Use a sound lotto game.
11. Build a tower using blocks, say ready steady go before the child knocks the tower down.



Rhyme Activities

1. Sing a familiar nursery rhyme through once then sing it again but pause and miss out a rhyming word for the children to fill in i.e. 'Twinkle Twinkle Little.....!'
2. Read a rhyming book and stress the rhyming words. If the children know the story well then leave a space for the children to fill in the rhyming word i.e. 'Run run as fast as you can, you can't catch me I'm the gingerbread!'
3. Play different rhythms with instruments and ask the children to copy i.e. fast, slow etc

Concept Activities



Choose a different activity for each week of your group. Consider repeating concepts or activities for children where necessary.

Wet/Dry

1. Using a tray of sand and tools mix water into the sand. Touch and dig with the sand before and after adding water. Talk about how it feels.
2. Feel each others hands and talk about how they feel. Go to the sink or water tray and get your hands wet, talk about how they feel now. Dry your hands with a towel, are they wet or dry? Is the towel wet or dry?
3. Have a selection of foods, talk about them and empty a few spoons onto a plate, talk about the texture of the food and whether they are wet or dry.
4. Bring a basket of "washing" and talk about whether they are clothes for wet and/or dry weather.
5. Ask the children to help with washing up some cups, talk about what is wet and what is dry.
6. Use a paintbrush and some pots of water, paint water on outside walls, talk about areas that are wet/dry.

Hot/Cold

1. Show the children a selection of food, talk about what they are, taste them (allergies allowing), do we eat them hot or cold?
2. Look through a travel magazine or at some photos of different countries or weather. Do they look hot or cold?
3. Bring a basket containing a selection of toy animals or puppets, where do they live? Do they like hot or cold weather?
4. Bring a basket of "washing" and try some clothes on. Do you think you should wear them in hot or cold weather? What clothes do we wear when it is hot and cold?

In Front/Behind

Give each child a teddy bear or doll that sits up and tell the children to dance until they hear the music stop. The first time ask the children to stop in front of the bear/doll, the next time behind. Repeat this changing your instruction between in front and behind.

All sit around a chair in the centre of the circle; take turns to ask children to go in front or behind the chair.

Make a train. Begin by the practitioner being a "carriage" and needing an "engine". Ask one of the children to go in front or behind you. Repeat this until you have a full train and chug round the room together.

Using a dolls house, add dolls and furniture, talking about them going "in front" and "behind" other objects.



Concept Activities



Choose a different activity for each week of your group. Consider repeating concepts or activities for children where necessary.

Fast/Slow

1. Using a selection of cars and possibly a car mat, make cars move fast and slow.
2. Can you clap fast and slow, take turns so other children can say whether it was a fast Clap or a slow clap.
3. Play instruments (drums/tambourines/triangle) using a fast and slow beat.
4. Move around the room fast and slow, perhaps using “fast” and “slow” music.

Over and Under

1. Make an obstacle course using plant pots/chairs/sticks/books/sheets. Go over and under (or make a doll do it!) and talk about what you are doing!
2. Using a ball roll it over and under a table/chair/sheet.
3. Look at the pictures from the Bear Hunt, talk about going over and under and act out those parts of the story.
4. Build a train track with a bridge and road underneath. Talk about going over and under the bridge.

When a loud instrument is used make yourself big to move around the room, play a quiet instrument and make yourself small to move around the room! (You can use bottles with rice for a quiet sound or a pan and wooden spoon for a loud instrument).

Play skittles using plastic milk bottles, using a small and big ball roll the ball to knock them over. Talk about the big and small ball. You could also use big and small bottles and skittles and talk about these too!

Play musical statues but this time when the music stops make yourself big or small! Draw around practitioners and children’s hands, talk about big and small hands. Bring a laundry basket with dolls and children’s clothes, talk about big and small clothes. Peg them up on a washing line as you do so.

Long/Short

1. Playing cars - make long and short traffic jams!
2. Using play dough make long/short snakes or sausages
3. Look out for people with long and short hair. Look at family photographs together in photographs, in catalogues and talk about who has long and short hair. Use mirrors to look at your own hair, is it long or short?
4. Using threading resources with long and short ribbons/string.
5. Draw long and short lines on paper.



Concept Activities



Choose a different activity for each week of your group. Consider repeating concepts or activities for children where necessary.

On and under

1. Play hide and seek, either yourselves or by putting a teddy on/under objects in the room. Tell the hunter when they are getting warmer/colder (closer or further away).
2. Make a pile of clothes or objects. Add an item to the pile and talk about whether it is going under or on the top object until they all topple over.
3. Put one of your hands on a table, the next person puts one of their hands on top, talk about whose hand is on/under. Repeat this until everyone's hands are in one pile. The person with the hand at the bottom- "under" the others takes it out and puts it "on" the other hands. Keep doing this until the pile collapses!!

Loud/Quiet

1. Make some shakers and play them loudly and quietly to different music.
2. Play music on a CD player, turn the music up and down, talk about how it goes quiet and loud. Stop the music and stand still until the music starts again.
3. Clap using one finger, then two, then three and so on. Talk about how the clapping gets loud. Reverse this and talk about it becoming quiet.
4. Play Chinese whispers, talk about using a quiet voice.
5. Move around the room loudly and quietly (stamping, tiptoeing, crawling, galloping).

'The naughty cat'- Have a selection of boxes, bags and baskets. Ask each child in turn to put the cat either in or on one of the items.

This game can be made into an expressive language game. The adult hides the cat in or on an item and asks a child 'Where is the cat?'

Have two boxes one the right way up and the other with the bottom side up. Choose some objects i.e. cars, animals etc. and ask the children one at a time to put their object either in or on the boxes.

Have a selection of clothes, a toy washing machine or washing basket. Ask each child to put the clothes either in or on the machine or basket.



Categorisation Activities

Choose a category and then choose an activity to present the topic.

Choose a different category for each week of your group. Consider repeating activities and/or categories for children where necessary.

Categories may include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| a. Farm/domestic animals | f. Wild animals |
| b. Food | g. Clothes |
| c. Weather | h. Transport |
| d. Everyday objects | i. Toys |
| e. Instruments | j. Body parts |



- Put a selection of items in a bag and sing this song to the tune of 'Here we go round the mulberry bush':
"What have we got in the bag today? Bag today, bag today. What have we got in the bag today? Let's take a look!"
The practitioner makes the noise of the object or says something about it for the children to guess what it is. Take the object out of the bag and show the children. You could let them touch it and talk about it if appropriate for the group.
- The adult chooses from a selection of pictures of objects from the chosen category and describes it without the children seeing; the children have to guess what it is.
- Give a mixture of pictures or objects to the children and ask questions for example:
Who has an animal?
Who has something black?
Who has something you can eat?
If you have that thing you can stand up/wave your picture or stand in a hula hoop in the middle of your circle.
- Go through a catalogue together and cut out different interesting objects then talk about the types of things they are (Toys? Food? Furniture? Vehicles?).
- Collect a basket of objects from the category. Allow one child at a time to choose something from the basket, talk about what it is used for/made from/feels like etc.
- Have a selection of objects from the category in front of the children. Play I spy but by describing an object e.g. "I spy with my little eye, something round, blue, which you kick...."
- Look at story books with busy pictures for example 'Walking Through The Jungle' or 'The Little Red Train'. What can the children spot in the pictures? Talk about what types of things there are, what they look like, what they sound like, what they might feel like if we could touch them, whether we have ever seen a real one.....
- Use a story that contains a category e.g. The Hungry Caterpillar/Food. Talk about the group name 'Food', the food in the story and other foods the children like. Talk about things in the story that are not food. Use other stories based around a theme in the same way.



Lift off to Language Group Progress Record



Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Summary: _____

Signature: _____ Staff Name: _____ Role: _____



Lift Off To Language Evaluation Checklist



Date:

Activity	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child
Ball						
Attention and Listening						
Concept						
Categorisation						

Date:

Activity	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child
Ball						
Attention and Listening						
Concept						
Categorisation						

Date:

Activity	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child	Child
Ball						
Attention and Listening						
Concept						
Categorisation						



Sample wording for a letter to Parents/Carers

Lift off to Language Groups

Dear Parents/Carers,

The speech and language therapy service will be working with your child's school/ pre-school/nursery to develop language groups; the sessions will be run at the school/ pre-school/nursery by members of the Nursery Staff. We would like to invite your child to take part in the group.

The sessions will involve:

- Members of staff running the sessions to help promote children's language development.
- A speech and language therapist will occasionally visit the group to provide support to the nursery staff and give them advice about running the sessions.

Please note the speech and language therapist will not be there to observe your child.

Please could you fill in the form below to let us know if you would be happy for your child to take part in the groups, please hand the form to a member of staff.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Staff name/title/signature

Lift off to Language project

Child's Name: _____

I do/do not give permission for my child to take part in the language group.
Please delete as appropriate.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



Visual Timetable Pictures



Bear Hug



Name Game



Train Game



Instrument



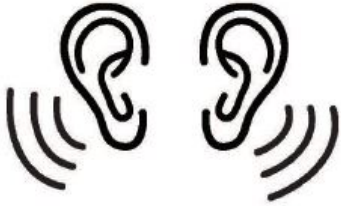
You may wish to develop your own pictures/photos to match the props you are using, e.g. your mascot.ball/basket.

Basket



Visual Timetable Pictures

Listening Ears



Hot and Cold



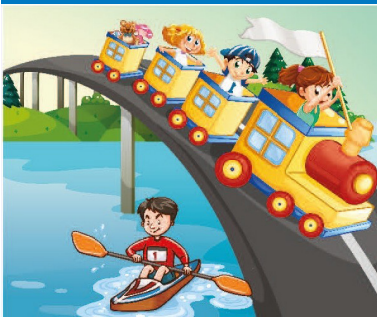
In Front and Behind



Fast and Slow



Over and Under



You may wish to develop your own pictures/photos to match the props you are using, e.g. your mascot.ball/basket.



Visual Timetable Pictures



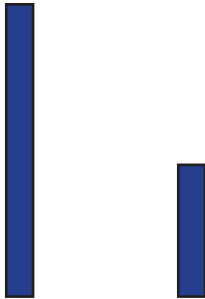
On and Under



In and Out



Long and Short



Big and Small



Wet and Dry



Loud and Quiet

