

Chatterboxes



What is a chatterbox?

A chatterbox is a box containing surprise items. They are put together to encourage children to talk and therefore develop their speech, language and communication skills.

What should a chatterbox contain?

It is important to link the contents to children's interests and previous experiences. Children often want to talk about things that they can relate to or are familiar with. This enables children to make connections in their thinking and language skills by focussing on things that they already understand.



How are chatterboxes used?

The box is designed to be introduced by an adult in small communication groups and is first opened together with the element of surprise. The contents can start off quite simple then built up over a series of sessions to increase vocabulary. Repetition is important for children to continue to make connections in their language.



How can chatterboxes be developed?

Once chatterboxes have been introduced and modelled, they can be used throughout the setting and sent home to parents as an activity for them to use with their child. [Chatterbox prompts](#) can be placed in the boxes to enable practitioners and parents to have ideas on how they can be used



Practitioners must remember the traffic light approach to developing speech, language and communication.

RED - stop - observe the child in play.

AMBER - wait - what is the child doing - play should follow the child's lead.

GO - respond to the child's play.

Things to consider;

- the importance of time for children to explore independently
- the ways in which the same resource can be used independently
- the importance of time for individual children, pairs and groups to investigate
- assumptions about the ways in which children will use the resources are not always correct

Chatter box prompts

Using the chatter boxes.

The contents of this box are a surprise and is something simple to do together to stimulate talking together.

- Open the box together with your child.
- Take the items out and look at them together.
- Take time (10 or 15 minutes) to talk about the items together using the prompts below.

Snails.

- Look at the snails and talk about the differences.
- Look for snails in the garden.
- Watch a snail move along.
- Look closely at the shell, body and eyes.

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Bugs.

- Share the book together.
- Find bugs in the garden.
- Look them up in the book.
- Draw/paint pictures of insects.

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Night time.

- Find a place to drape material for a den.
- Stick the stars around.
- Sit in the den together.
- Use the torch to see.
- What does it remind you of?
- What else could be in there?

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Teeth.

- Look at all your teeth.
- Why do we need to clean out teeth?
- Try brushing the big teeth.
- What foods are good for our teeth?
- What foods are bad for our teeth?

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Postcard.

- Talk about the picture on the front.
- Draw or write a message together.
- Talk about what happens when you post a letter.
- Post the letter.

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Interesting toast.

- Talk about the shape of the cutters.
- Make some toast together.
- Use the cutters to cut the toast into shapes.
- Have breakfast together.
- Which shapes tasted the best?

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Ice cubes.

- Talk about the shapes in the ice cube tray.
- Fill the tray with water and put in the freezer.
- Talk about water and how the freezer turns it into ice.
- Put the ice cubes in a drink at meal times and talk about what happens.

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Textures.

- Look at all the items.
- Handle all the things and talk about what they feel like.
- Talk about what they look like.
- What could they be used for?
- Which is your favourite?

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Growing.

- Grow some cress together.
- Wet the cotton wool and put it in the pot.
- Sprinkle the seeds over the top and put it on a window sill where it can be seen.
- Look at how the cress grows and talk about how it is getting bigger each day.
- Talk about growing.
- When it has grown, try eating some in a sandwich with cheese, ham or egg.
- What does it taste like?

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In the kitchen.

- Look at all the kitchen items.
- What could they be used for?
- Pretend to cook a meal.
- Let your child copy you as you cook the dinner.
- Talk about how the items feel and what they may be made of.