

# Phrase it Like This

Typically, when a child begins to talk there is a progression from sounds > words > phrases. However, this is not true for all children, these children often have delayed language development and rather than using individual words, will communicate using whole phrases. Essentially they communicate with words grouped together in phrases they have heard before, the technical term for this is 'delayed echolalia'. A child whose language is created by using memorised phrases and single words is called Gestalt Language Processing (GLP).

You may hear your child repeat a phrase they have heard from a favourite TV show, or maybe it's something that you say regularly at home eg 'Ooooh, it's chilly'. Initially, these phrases may not be used in context, for example saying 'ooh it's chilly' on a 30°C day. However, over time these 'stock' phrases may begin to be used appropriately. It is also not uncommon for a phrase heard a long time ago, to unexpectedly make an appearance.

Where do these phrases come from? We have noticed that they can come from favourite songs, TV shows and films, in addition to common phrases used by family and friends. If you know that your child speaks uses phrases they have heard, then we suggest that rather than using single words to use a phrase, and rather than 'speak' the phrase, to sing it.

Eg 'Joseph put your coat on' > Tune: Polly put the kettle on

If your child has a favourite TV show or film, you could create a list of useable phrases from that:

Here are some examples, using the popular Disney film Encanto:

<b>Phrase From Encanto</b>	<b>Use it when you mean</b>
What's hurting the magic?	What is wrong?
We got to get out of here	It's time to leave
Whoa, a lot of stairs	Climb the stairs
You can't hurry the future	Take your time
After I save the miracle, I'm taking you home	After this we'll go home

As with any intervention to support a child's speech and language development, the key is constancy. The more children hear words and phrases used in context, the better it is for the development of their communication skills.