



# ECHOLALIA

## WHAT IS ECHOLALIA?

One way children learn language and to communicate with others is through **repeating language**.

If you have ever noticed your child **copying phrases or sentences word-for-word**, they are probably using echolalia!

Sometimes children will repeat something you have said **straight away**. Sometimes children will repeat something **a long time after** - even weeks or months after hearing it!

## WHY DO CHILDREN USE ECHOLALIA?

Children use echolalia for lots of reasons!



**When they don't understand something:** Your child might not be sure what to say, but know they need to say something. So, they might just repeat back what you said!

**For processing time:** Your child might repeat what you have said to buy them more time to think about what they want to say next.  
**For connection:** Your child might try to connect and interact with you by repeating phrases they have heard before.

**To tell you something:** They might use a phrase they have heard before to ask for something specific. For example, your child might say "to infinity and beyond!" to tell you that they want to watch Toy Story

**To express an emotion:** Your child might use a phrase they have heard before that they link to a specific feeling. E.g., your child might say the "there's no way out!" from Finding Nemo when they feel sad or need help.

**As a social script:** They might repeat something they have heard before and repeat it during social situations. For example, they might say "Hi my name is Freddy what is your name?" every time they walk in a room.

**For comfort:** They might repeat something to comfort themselves when they feel anxious. E.g., they might have heard Mummy say "you're okay darling" and repeat this when they are sad.

**Stimming:** Your child might use phrases they have heard before and repeat them to "stim". This may help them to manage their emotions, manage sensory experiences, express themselves, or just because they enjoy it!



## TOP TIPS

Echolalia is a **great form of communication** for lots of children! **We never want to stop or discourage it.** Instead, we can help our children by:

**Being a detective:** Think about the **phrases your child uses**, **where they have heard them** before, and **what they might be trying to tell you**. Are they asking you for something? Are they telling you how they feel? Are they stimming?

**Getting involved:** Show your child that you are listening and have heard them, even if you haven't quite figured out what they mean yet. **Respond to them** e.g., by **repeating** what they have said, or **using a phrase** like "wow!"

**Modelling alternatives:** Once you have worked out what your child might be telling you, model back a **simple phrase** that might be more useful. **For example**, your child might say "there's no way out!" when they can't open their crisp packet. An adult could help them open the crisps while saying "I need help!"

