

Encouraging Communication

We want the best for children and we want their wants and needs to be met. But if children have everything they want to hand, they have no reason to communicate with you. It is important to **create** situations which encourage communication. These activities might motivate your child to communicate with you. This might be by speaking, babbling, looking, gesturing or signing. It is important that you respond to their communication. This shows your child that their communication has a purpose and it will encourage your child to communicate more often.

Play with toys together with your child

Encourage play by playing alongside your child and copying their play. Keep your language short and simple when speaking to them. Reduce noise distractions by turning off the TV or radio or moving to a quieter space. Reduce visual distractions by trying to use one toy at a time. When they have finished put this toy away and get out another one. Try taking turns – blowing bubbles is good for this or playing with a ball.

Food and Snacks

Keep snacks in a clear container where they are out of reach. This creates an opportunity for your child to communicate that they want a snack by pointing, talking or using hand gestures.

People Toys

These are toys which your child needs help from an adult in order to make them work

- Bubbles
Children often love bubbles but it is difficult for them to blow them themselves. Open the bubbles and blow a few. As soon as your child starts to watch or pop the bubbles, close the pot or pause holding the bubble wand. Wait until your child asks you, in some way, for you to blow them again.
- Mechanical toys
Make the toy go. When it stops wait for your child to request, in some way to make it go again.

Pause when playing

When playing a favourite game with your child such as blowing bubbles, singing a song, peek-a-boo, chasing game, etc., suddenly pause until they indicate for you to start again. Look carefully for their indications; it might just be a very quick look or a smile.

Place favourite things out of reach

Put your child's favourite book or toy high up on a shelf out of his/her reach. Wait for your child to request, in some way, that they want it. Put favourite toys or food in a clear container that is difficult to open. Wait for your child to ask you, in some way, to help open it.

Offer things bit by bit

Give toys, food and drink bit by bit so that children have the opportunity to communicate that they would like some more. Toys that have pieces and parts can be given bit by bit. Hold puzzle pieces, crayons, blocks, cars, train track, etc. back (but where the child can see them). Give the child one and wait for the child to request, in some way, that they want another.

Move objects from their usual place

Move objects that you know your child might want or need from where they usually expect it to be such as their shoes, drink bottle, TV remote, toys. Observe your child noticing that it has gone and comment using a short sentence 'shoes gone', 'where's car?'. Add a gesture such as shrugging your shoulders or pointing to where it should be. Join your child in 'looking' for the object. Use little sentences to say where you are looking like "on sofa" or "in box".

Make changes to routines

If you dress your child, put their clothes on the wrong parts (E.g. their sock on their head) and look for their reaction. At meal or snack times, give your child their cup without any drink in it, or give them food in a container or packet they can't open on their own.

Phones/Tablets

Take pictures of your child through the day as they are busy doing things. Talk to them about what they are doing and use the same language when you look at the photos again with your child.

Encourage your child to show their photos to another adult/child who was not there so they can tell them what they were doing. Use the same language again when you look at the photos.

Lots of repetition of the same language will help your child learn and remember new words.