



CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE



For anyone to have good communication skills, they need 3 things:

1. **Means:** your child needs ways to communicate e.g., through spoken language, picture symbols, signs, body language, or facial expressions
2. **Reasons:** your child needs reasons to communicate e.g., to ask for things, to give opinions, express emotions, to make choices etc
3. **Opportunities:** your child needs lots of opportunities to communicate. **This is where you as your child's parent/carer can support your child!**

This sheet gives you lots of ideas for activities to provide your child with opportunities to communicate!



PEOPLE GAMES

People games are physical games you can play with children without toys

For example, tickling, chasing games, peekaboo, songs with actions (e.g., row row row your boat)

People games should be predictable and repetitive

People games are motivating for your child, so may encourage them to communicate with you!

Start people games the same way every time so your child knows what is going to happen

Plan a turn for your child in the people game e.g., when singing "if you're happy and you know it" you can pause to let them clap their hands

Help them to take their turn – leave a pause to see if they can take their turn on their own. If they can't, gently use hand over hand to clap their hands for them. If they don't like hand over hand, clap your own hands.

Keep these games fun and repetitive!

Use an animated tone of voice and exaggerated facial expressions to keep them interested. Carry out the game the same way every time!

LEAVING PAUSES AND LITTLE MISTAKES

You can give your child a chance to tell you something by making a little mistake and leaving pauses. Some examples of this could be:

- Leave the lid on the paint during painting
- Leave the last piece of a puzzle in sight but out of reach
- When singing songs, miss out a word/action. See if they can fill in the gap.
- Blow a few bubbles and then waiting to see if they can ask for "more"

Do not use these strategies for things your child needs, such as food or drinks



NURSERY RHYMES

Nursery rhymes are a great way to help children learn language!

Nursery rhymes help children to learn new words, recognise sounds in words, and help them to learn basic interaction skills.

When singing nursery rhymes with your child, leave pauses to see if they can fill in the gap!

Use an animated voice and exaggerated facial expressions to keep them interested

Give your child a choice of which nursery rhyme they want to sing. You could use objects that represent the song to help them choose (e.g., a toy boat for "row row row your boat" or a toy spider for "incy wincy spider")

CHOICES

Give your child lots of opportunities to make choices throughout the day

Use objects or pictures to help them to make choices e.g., show them a choice between two drinks they might want using objects

Some children find making choices tricky. You can help them practice! Start by giving your child a choice between something they will want and something they will not want. For example, their favourite sensory toy or a spoon.

Over time, introduce choices between items they will be very motivated by and an item they would be a little motivated by. Eventually, move onto offering two highly motivating items for them to choose between