

Creating the Need to Communicate

Provide the opportunity for children to communicate by not anticipating all of their needs, by changing a familiar routine and by offering them choices.

Remember that communication is not just about “talking”. It may be signing, an attempt at a word, a noise, a gesture, or any other attempt to get your attention.

Always try to wait for the child to initiate communication.

You can try the following ideas to encourage attempts to communicate:

Requesting an Object:

- Make “silly” mistakes. Put on one shoe but not the other. During painting/drawing give them the paper but no paints/crayons. Wait for the child to let you know what’s missing.
- Put a favourite toy, snack or drink out of their reach but still in sight. Wait for them to request the toy by looking/pointing/vocalising before giving it to them.
- Offer a choice of 2 objects, showing them and naming them at the same time, for example ‘juice or water?’ and wait for a definite response from the child before giving them the chosen item – a look, reach, sound or change in body posture may be the way the child indicates they want something.

Requesting an Action:

- Close the door to the garden/outside area so they need to ask for the door to be opened to play outside.
- During physical games get the child to join in with lots of different actions e.g. kicking a ball, jumping, spinning. Then stand still and wait for them to request the next action. Give them your full attention and wait expectantly so you are ready to pick up on any cues your child gives.
- Sing action rhymes with the child and stop at an appropriate point so that they have to request continuation of the action e.g. The Wheels on the Bus, Incey Wincey Spider, Round and Round the Garden – stopping before the tickle / favourite part is a great way to encourage the child to join in.
- Open a jar of bubbles; blow the bubbles and then stop. Wait for the child to request more/again - in any way they can, and then blow more bubbles.
- Blow up a balloon and let it deflate slowly. Hold the deflated balloon in your mouth and wait for the child to request that you to blow it up again.



Requesting Assistance/Help:

- Put the child's favourite food or toy in a clear container that they can't open whilst they are watching. Put the container in front of them and wait for a request for help
- Put a favourite toy on a shelf out of reach and bring it to the child's attention. Wait for them to let you know they want the toy.

Requesting Recurrence/ More/ Again:

- Only give the child a small amount of juice or snack (one crisp or one raisin) and wait for them to request more
- Begin playing a favourite activity such as building bricks. After a few turns hold all the bricks in your hand. Wait for the child to ask for more bricks.
- Pause at a crucial moment in rough and tumble games e.g. chasing, tickling, swinging round and wait for the child to indicate that they want you to complete the routine.
- Activate a wind-up toy or one that the child cannot operate on their own, deactivate it and wait for the child to request it again.

