

PATIENT INFORMATION

Create Opportunities to Communicate

Speech and Language Therapy Factsheet

I create motivating opportunities for my child to communicate throughout the day.

How does this help?

- It gives my child a reason to communicate.
- It provides my child with frequent opportunities to practise his or her communication skills.
- Research has found that children with communication difficulties who are given the most opportunities to communicate, have been found to communicate the most.

What should I do?

- Provide opportunities for my child to communicate throughout the day **during routines**, such as daily routines (e.g. dressing, bath time, meal times, nappy change, bed time), play routines, songs and rhymes, and stories.
- When my child is familiar with a routine, **alter the routine slightly** to create an opportunity for her to take a turn or send me a message.
- Use my child's **favourite things** to motivate him to communicate.
- **Reduce the physical and verbal support** I give my child as soon as possible to enable her to communicate just with cues from the environment (e.g. the sight of a toy out of reach).
- If my child doesn't yet use words, **accept eye-contact, gesture or vocalisation** as a means of communication, and say the important words for him.

Examples

- **Pause in the middle of familiar routines** (e.g. hold a bubble wand to my mouth and wait).
- Offer my child **choices** of activities, toys or food (e.g. "car or ball?") as I hold up the objects.

- Give my child **small portions** of his favourite things to encourage him to make more requests (e.g. break biscuits into pieces).
- Hold or place things that my child wants or needs **in view but out of reach** to encourage her to request (e.g. wand for blowing bubbles; spoon for yoghurt; paintbrush for painting).
- **Hold on to objects** for slightly longer than usual before allowing my child to take it, to encourage her to look at me, gesture/sign, vocalise or copy my word/s.
- Give my child things that he **needs help with** (e.g. a favourite item in a clear container that he cannot open) to encourage him to request an action or help.
- Give my child **disliked or unwanted objects** to encourage her to reject or protest.
- Make **deliberate mistakes** to encourage my child to request or comment (e.g. spill something on the table or floor; offer a puzzle piece that doesn't fit).
- Set up **surprises** for my child (e.g. hide a banana in the sock drawer) to encourage her to label objects or comment.

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.