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Handouts to support Communication

The following pack contains four handouts on supporting your child's communication skills.

The first handout explains how to use **communication temptations** to encourage your child to start initiating communication and taking more turns in interactions.

The second handout outlines how to target **language and communication in play**. It has advice for targeting interactions, understanding and using language, and making sounds in your child's daily play.

The third handout explains how to help your child develop skills in **making choices**. It provides information on how to introduce choice making and how to design and use choice boards.

The fourth handout describes how to target **language in story book reading**. This is another frequent routine at home that you can use to work on language and communication with your child.

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Communication Temptations

Communication temptations are strategies we can use to encourage or 'tempt' children to initiate an interaction.

Communication temptations set up situations where children need to communicate to get an item or an activity to happen.

The aim is get your child to communicate with you using whatever way they are currently communicating, e.g. using body movement, looking at something they want, reaching/pointing, sounds, words/phrases, Lámh sign or picture communication systems.



Here are some ideas for communication temptations:

1. **Offer your child a 'little' then wait** (e.g. one piece of the puzzle, one piece of biscuit, blow one bubble, one mouthful of juice in the cup). Your child might then ask for more. You may need to show them more is available by holding the item up but out of reach.
2. **Make a 'mistake'** (e.g. give them their dinner with no spoon, put their sock on their hand) and wait. Your child may then try to show/tell you what's wrong.
3. **Offer them choices** (with toys, activities, foods, drinks) – see handout on making choices for more information and ideas for choice making.
4. Give them a toy/item where **they need your help** and cannot do themselves (e.g. wind up toys, unopened bubbles, a packet of a snack they can't open). Your child should then be encouraged to ask you for help.
5. **Pause or change a familiar routine** – stop singing during a routine song and see if the child will communicate with you to continue the song; leave out words within familiar songs; skip sections or change the order of familiar routines (e.g. within routine songs, mealtimes, bedtime and bath time routines)

For example: If singing 'row, row your boat' you can pause at the **'high point'** ('don't forget to scream' – pause) and see if the child will continue ('ahhhhh')

6. **Put a desired item within view but out of reach** (e.g. on high shelves, within clear jam jars or lunch boxes so that the child can see the item but they can't open without your help)

Language and Communication in Play

How to get interactions going in play

Follow your child's lead... - Your child will be more likely to interact with you if the focus of the play is something they are interested in.

Notice what they are playing and how they are playing it... – are they tapping on the floor? are they playing with a cup? Are they banging the cup or pretending to take a drink?

... Then try and join in – if you get involved by joining in or imitating what your child is doing you might get a longer interaction going.

When you have the interaction going you can try and **add new things to the play**. You might add a new way of playing: instead of spinning the wheels of the car let's put it down a slide, or instead of drinking from the cup let's give some to Mummy or teddy.

Or you might try and **add language to your play...**

How to add language in play

Labelling play

Label what your child is doing in their play so you are telling the story of their play. This will give them the words they would use in their play. You might use Lámh signs as well if you are using Lámh with your child.



For example: your child is driving a car up and down a ramp. Get your own car and label it for your child 'car' then imitate your child's play beside the ramp and say (and sign) 'up.....and down' as the car goes up and down. Then label how the play changes e.g. if the car falls you could say (and sign) 'oh fall down'

Adding more words in play

If your child is using some words you can expand on what your child has said in their play by **adding more words**.

For example: your child is playing with a car and labels it 'car' you can expand this by adding more words to describe it e.g. 'red car, Johnny's car, big car'

You can add describing words e.g. size, shape, colour and action words e.g. 'dolly's eating, sleeping, crying'

How to target making sounds in play

Play is a great way to introduce making sounds. Sometimes children will use sounds like those below in their play before they use words.

The following are examples of sounds you can use in play routines. Make the sound every time you play and repeat it so your child hears it a lot and may copy you.

You might need to use the sound **repetitively and consistently** in the game for some time before your child may copy you.

‘mmm’ – playing restaurant, feeding baby/teddy, at mealtimes

‘whee’ – on the swing, see saw or going down the slide

‘ssss’ – play animal snakes

‘rawr- play wild animals and dinosaurs or puppets

‘moo, baa etc’ – play farm animals or puppets

‘woof/meow/tweet’ – play dog/cat/bird animals or puppets or when you see these outside

‘vroom’ – cars, trucks

‘choo choo’ – trains

‘uh-oh’ – something falls/breaks

‘ahhhh’ – nursery rhymes like row row your boat

‘pop’ - bubbles



Making Choices

Why work on making choices?

Making choices during work time and playtime provides children with the opportunity to communicate with others and to take some control over their environment.

What do I need to know to work on making choices?

Some children will be able to make choices from spoken word options but others will require a **visual representation** to support their choice making.

If children need a visual to help them make the choice you need to know **what visual supports they understand:**

1. Objects
2. Photos
3. Colour pictures
4. Written word

If you are not sure start with the objects e.g. do you want the apple or the orange with the actual fruits as the visual support.

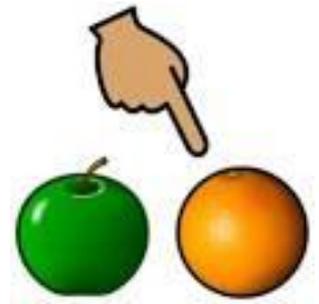
You will **always use the spoken word with a visual representation** to continue to teach spoken word understanding.

How to work on introducing making choices with your child:

If you are introducing choice making start with just **two choices** and you can add more choices as your child develops their choice making skills.

- Show one choice e.g. ball
- Then the second choice e.g. puzzle
- And then hold out both options to let the child choose
- Try and keep the language you use simple 'do you want the ball (show ball) or the puzzle (show puzzle)' and then hold out both, as shown in the pictures below

Your child might make the choice by looking at what they want, reaching/pointing at the object or via spoken language.



How to work on progressing making choices with your child:

If your child is used to making choices between two items or activities you can expand this to more than two choices and introduce a **choice board**. Show your child all the choices and ensure they understand them. You can then provide your child with the choice board during their day and let them choose items or activities.

Examples of choice boards are below, you can use objects, photos, pictures or words depending on what your child responds to best.

Object choice board



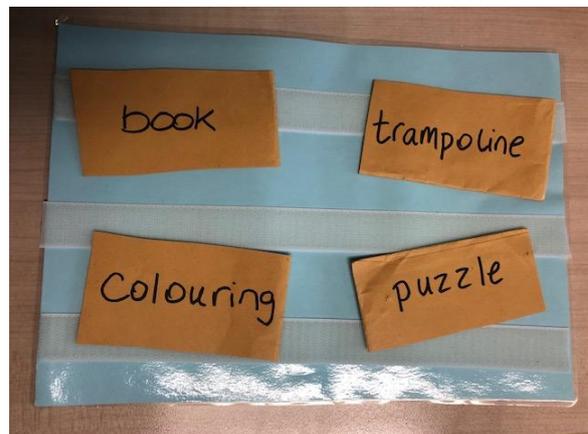
Photo choice board



Picture choice board



Word choice board



Language in Story Book Reading

Sharing books with your child is a great way for them to learn new words, language and imagine new experiences and places. Reading stories with your child is a natural one-to-one time for interaction and is also setting the foundation for reading and writing skills.



Remember you do not have to read a book one way:

- You don't have to start at the beginning and get to the end in the right order
- You can flip through pages to get to a favourite part
- You do not have to read the words that are written on each page instead you can change the words, make the sentences shorter or even just look at the pictures
- Children love repetition so you can read the same book over and over again
- Follow your child's lead in the book reading and have fun reading it the way they want to read the book

Add language when reading books:

- Read **slowly**, keep in mind that your child is still learning what the words mean
- You may need to **shorten the sentences** to help your child understand
- **Point to the pictures** as you talk about them so that you give your child more help to learn what the words mean (e.g. point to the dog when you say 'dog')
- **Repeat and stress** the words you want your child to learn
- **Pause at regular intervals** to give your child a chance to take a turn (e.g. your child may point, repeat, ask a question) or say repetitive words or lines in the book
- Don't ask too many questions (e.g. what's this) – instead use language to **label**, make **comments** and **describe** and then wait for responses from your child
- Look at pages for as long as your child wants and **comment on things that interest them**, these are the words your child would want to use
- Try to use a **range of language** (ie, name things, use actions words, describe how things look/feel, use emotive words (happy, sad, angry), use locations words (up, down, under)
- If your child is using some single words you can **expand your child's language** – when they say a word / use a Lámh sign try to expand their language by adding more words
 - Example: Child says "Dog" and points to the dog in the story, you can say "Big dog" or "Dog is running" or "Dog is dirty"
- Try to read books that build your child's **imagination** – read stories about castles, pirates, fairies and ghosts and other things that your child can't experience in "real life"

Types of books to read:

- Books with thick board pages so your child can turn them
- Short books with rhyme, rhythm and repetition for your child to join in with turns
- Books with brightly coloured, realistic pictures
- Interactive books (i.e. sound buttons, lift flaps, different textures to feel)
- Nursery rhymes
- Homemade personalised books (i.e. with photos of your child and family members) you can also download story creator apps on your phone to make photo stories
- Wordless picture books where you make the words for the story
- Imaginative story books

