

Helping Your Child to Make Choices

As adults we have many choices in all aspects of our daily life.

- what to wear
- what to eat
- what to watch on TV

If we aren't given choices, we may become angry and frustrated. For example, if we went into a restaurant and the waiter gave us fish when we really wanted chicken we would not be happy. We are able to make our choices known because we can tell people what we want. We may also communicate by using gestures, e.g. pointing to the meal we want.

Children with communication difficulties may find it hard to make the choices that other children can make. We need to offer children choices as much as possible in order to give them the opportunity to communicate their likes and dislikes with us.

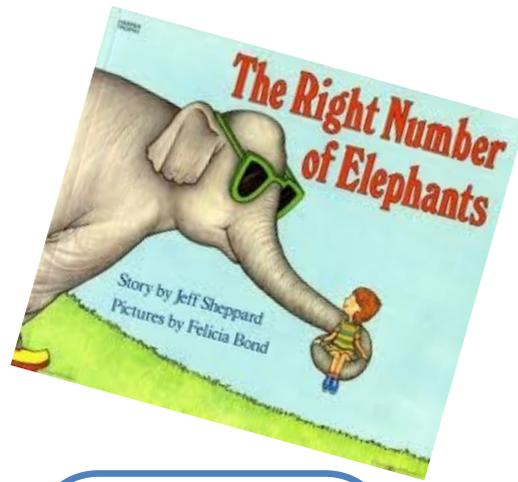
When we offer children choices, it is important that we not only give them a choice, but also give them a **way** of telling us what they want. If we don't do this it puts the children into a similar situation as we would be in if we were in a Chinese take-away, where the waiter only spoke Cantonese and the menu was written in Cantonese. We would have plenty of choice but no way of knowing what the choice is and no way of telling the waiter what we want.

Choices can:

- help develop understanding of words
- help develop understanding of early reasons why we communicate
- begin to develop children's ability to ask for what they want or want to do
- increase a child's motivation to communicate

When first learning to choose it helps to offer your child a choice of something they want and another thing they don't want. For example, "Do you want the biscuit or the carrot?"

"Do you want to play with the ball or read a story?" As you present the objects, remember to always name them.



Ball... or

Book?

Wait for your child to tell you what they want. They may do this by **reaching, looking, pointing, making a sound, saying the word or using a gesture.**

Accept any appropriate methods of communication. It is important that you give them the item they have chosen, even if it's not the one that you think they want.

This will let them know that they will get what they ask for and help them to develop more effective communication skills.

Decide what choices you are going to offer and when, how and who will do it.

Try to be consistent and make sure everyone agrees what methods of communication will be accepted. Don't worry if it doesn't work straight away - keep trying, it can take a while.