

Opportunities to Communicate

Some children with communication difficulties can struggle to express themselves and use their language to ask for things they need or like. If a child is able to easily get the things they need by themselves, they are likely to continue to do this, rather than using language to do this. It can be useful to create situations to encourage communication. Here are some suggestions:

1. Place favourite things within view but out of reach.

- Place your child's favourite food on a high shelf or countertop where they can see but not reach it.
- Do the same with their favourite toy on a shelf that is out of reach but within their view.
- Place a favourite object like crisps/toy car in a clear container that is hard to open.

Then wait.



2) Use People Toys

These toys are hard to operate toys like spinning tops, music boxes and bubbles that encourage interaction, as your child needs help to make them work. Even if your child learns to operate it by themselves, you need to show them that it is more fun to play with you than alone.

These people toys may interest your child. Let your child explore each toy and wait for them to become frustrated or ask for help. Then step in and make the toy work.

Wind Up Toys – A jumping mouse or other wind up toy may appeal to your child. Make it go. When it stops, hand it to your child and wait for them to request that you make it go again.

Bubbles – Blow a few. As soon as your child starts to watch or pop the bubbles, close the bottle. Wait for them to ask you in some way to open it again. Repeat this again. Your child may use eye contact, make a sound/word.

Balloons – Blow up the balloon and let the air out. (Your child may like it if you let the balloon fly in the air). Then put the balloon to your mouth and wait for your child to ask you in some way, to do it again.



You can do the same with Music boxes/Jack in the boxes/Spinning Tops.

3) Create your own People Toys

Silly Hat – Put a silly hat on your head and encourage your child to pull it off. After a few times, make it difficult for them to reach. Wait for them to ask you in some way for the hat. You can do the same thing with glasses/scarves.

Water Taps – Turn on the water and let your child play with the water. Turn it off and wait for them to ask for more.

Mirrors- Children are often fascinated with their reflection. Play peek-a-boo. Hold your child away from the mirror saying Where'sand then jump in front of the mirror saying "There's" After doing this a few times, hold your child away from the mirror for a longer time. Wait for them to let you know that they want to see themselves again. Mirrors are also good for copycat games.

4) Offer things bit by bit

If you give your child everything your child wants all at once, they won't need to ask you for anything. Giving small amounts provides opportunities for your child to communicate their needs to you.

You can also do this with toys that have lots of pieces such as lego, bricks, puzzles. If you give these one by one, your child will have repeated opportunities to ask for things they need. You may need to hide pieces up your sleeve/behind your back to that your child can't grab the pieces.



5) Give all but one or make deliberate mistakes

Give your child all but one of the things they need for an activity. Hold it out of reach but within view and wait for your child to ask you for it in some way. For example forgetting one shoe or at breakfast time pour the cereal and forget the spoon.



6) Offer choices

Offer choices all of the time and wait for a response (e.g. 'banana or biscuit?')

Initially you can just accept pointing or reaching towards the choice, but as the child gets a little older, pause and wait for a vocalization or word. Offer motivating and non-motivating items to encourage your child to vocalize, for example a favourite toy and piece of paper. If your child does not attempt to communicate, try giving them the non-motivating item and wait for their response.