

Creating Opportunities for Interaction

Some children need a bit of help to get an interaction going. As parents you will naturally anticipate your child's needs, however this can sometimes mean our children do not have a reason to communicate with us.

Try some of these strategies at home when you are playing with your child.

Hard to operate toys



Often your child will need your help to get something they like. Hard to operate toys are things they can't do themselves e.g. bubbles, balloons, wind-up toys. Show your child the motivating item to get their interest. Demonstrate the toy e.g. by blowing bubbles or balloon or winding up the toy. When the activity has finished wait for your child to communicate to ask for some more. This might be with a word or using non-verbal communication. Activities that are short are best for this. Your child will need to have lots of regular chances to ask for more to make it effective.

Placing items out of reach

Put your child's favourite toy out of reach but where they can still see it. If your child is likely to try and climb up a shelving unit, put the favourite item in a clear plastic storage box. Wait for your child to request in some way that they want the item before helping to open the box or get the item down.

Giving smaller amounts



When having snacks at home give your child small amounts. If they like things like crisps, grapes or chocolate buttons, give them one at a time. Give your child one piece then wait for them to communicate that they want more. This can be done with lots of foods e.g. toast - cut into smaller pieces.

Games and songs

Lots of children love nursery rhymes and copying the actions. Choose a song that your child likes. Always start the song the same way, use the same actions and words and finish the song the same way. This allows your child to learn what happens. When your child is familiar choose a point to pause in the song and wait for them to send you a message. Your child can also ask for the song to be sang again at the end. Games like peepo or tickles can also be used to encourage interaction. Pause during the game e.g. when your eyes are covered and wait for your child to communicate they want more.

Piece by piece

Some activities involve pieces e.g. jigsaws, bricks. Be the 'keeper of the toys' and give your child one item at a time. Wait for them to communicate that they want more. This can also be achieved with toys like a car or ball run. Put the car down the track. When it gets to the end, take the car from the child and wait for them to ask you for another turn.

Something silly

Many children love it when adults do something out of the ordinary. When dressing your child, 'accidentally' forget to put an item of clothing on them, or put something on wrong e.g. only give them one sock, put their coat on backwards. Give everyone else something that the child likes apart from them e.g. their drink at snack time. Wait for the child to notice and to communicate with you in some way that something isn't right.



Offering choices

Often children will have favourite toys, foods or other items that adults around them know about. This means that they will be given the things they want without having to communicate. Give your child choices to encourage them to interact.

This could be a choice at snack time - do you want apple or banana?

It could be when dressing - do you want blue or red socks?

It could be in play - do you want the tiger or the elephant?

Show your child the items you are offering to support their understanding. Offer the choice and then wait for them to communicate with you what they want. Even if they choose something you know they don't like, it is important to honour the choice to help develop their understanding.