

Developing Interactions with

Pre-Verbal Children

Copying and turn-taking

Communication involves listening, waiting, and taking turns – co-operation and interaction between two people. When your child makes a sound or action, and you respond with a sound/action this is the basis of communication. After copying your child, you can add a new sound or action and leave a pause to allow your child the chance to copy you. Look out for chances to share lots of copying and turn-taking, increasing these interactions will help your child’s communication grow.

Offer choices

Show your child a choice of two objects and ask, “Do you want X or Y?”, give them the one they reach for, naming it for them. Getting the item they want and hearing the word for it as they do so is a powerful way of supporting their communication development.

People games

People games are all about interaction between two people. Playing chase, tickling games, peekaboo, splashing with water in the sink are a few examples of people games. When playing it is important to make sure you pause. Then when your child looks at you, or makes a sound, or an action, continue with the game. Your child will learn that those looks, sounds or actions have an impact, and this will encourage them to interact more!

Keep it visual

Use and encourage pointing, gestures and signing alongside spoken language to support understanding,

encourage interactions and use of language. Show objects as you talk about them, and as a means of showing children what will happen next (e.g. show a plate to show it is dinner time or shoes to show it is time to go out).



Encouraging use of sounds

Respond to any sounds your child makes by making the sound back, giving them the item they want or praising them. Build anticipation and excitement in play/games to encourage sound making. At times, pause and leave a space to encourage your child to copy sounds. Use “symbolic noises”, these are sounds associated with an object such as animal noises/car noises/yum yum when eating; they are a stepping stone to other words.

Joining in with play

Watch to see what your child is interested in, get down to their level making sure you are face-to-face and join in with their play. Talk about what your child can see and what they are doing. Keep your language simple, matching it to the level of your child.

Building and sharing attention

Attention and listening skills are a key part of effective communication. Joining in with and adding something new or exciting to your child’s play will support the growth of their attention skills alongside using an animated face and voice or “ready, steady go” games such as blowing bubbles.

