

Speech and Language Therapy

Top Tips for Encouraging your Child to Communicate

Some children learn to talk easily and are keen to tell you everything. Some children need more encouragement and need you to give them extra opportunities and reasons to talk. Here are a few ideas which will help.

- ✓ **Make it less easy for your child to get their favourite things.** Place your child's favourite items out of reach but within view e.g. on a high shelf or in clear containers with tight lids. Try to hold back and let them request the item.
- ✓ **Give small portions.** At meals or snack time, offer bite-sized or small portions e.g. cut up a sandwich and give only part of it at a time or put only a small amount of drink in a cup at a time. Help your child to understand that more is available by giving *subtle* clues such as saying 'We have more juice' or by showing the food/drink item.
- ✓ **Create the need for help.** Give your child access to a favourite item that he needs your assistance to enjoy e.g. winding up a toy, turning on the TV or open a container. Don't automatically turn on or fix things for your child so they learn they need to request through words, gestures or signs.
- ✓ **Interrupt a favourite activity you do together.** Begin a favourite activity that you and your child do together, once you are both enjoying yourselves, stop the activity and encourage your child to signal to you that he wants to continue. For example, stop pushing your child on the swing or stop singing a favourite song partway through.
- ✓ **Accidentally forgetting.** There will be times when you can pretend you have forgotten to do something so your child has to get your attention. E.g. don't give your child a spoon with their yoghurt or only put one of his shoes on.

- ✔ **Offer your child something that they do not like.** Then encourage them to tell you 'no' in an appropriate way.

- ✔ **Offer a choice.** Hold out two items and encourage your child to make a choice - e.g. 'water or milk?'
 - When your child has shown an interest in the item e.g. by looking at it or reaching for it, pause and wait instead of asking what they want straight away.
 - Wait at least 5 seconds looking expectantly at your child, and then if your child has not responded say the word or use a sign or gesture.
 - Sometimes your child may also be helped by a lead-in phrase such as 'I want...'
and then wait a few seconds for your child to finish the sentence.