

Creating Language Opportunities

It is important to make talking worthwhile for the child. It is often easy for children to obtain what they want by non-verbal means. Demand some effort on their part before they get what they want and make language something the child uses to get across their needs and wants.

How to create situations where communication is necessary

Completing only part of an activity - E.g. when giving a drink, put only a small amount of liquid in the cup.

Missing items - give the child all but one of the items required for an activity so that they will need to indicate in some way that something is missing. (For this to be successful, it is necessary that the child is familiar with the task before you take away one of the components.) E.g. give a paintbrush and paper, but no paint or when brushing teeth, hide the toothpaste, at bath time hide the plug

Doing the unexpected - do something silly or unexpected in a routine situation and see what reaction you get. E.g. brush the child's hair with a spoon or roll a ball to the child a few times and then roll a different toy to the child when they are expecting the ball.

Rearranging the environment - if the child can reach everything they need in the environment, put things away or on a high shelf so there is a reason to ask for them. E.g. Place a desired food item or toy in a clear container that your child cannot open and then wait.

Requesting from another person - choose an activity that requires another person. For example: Pause when throwing a ball or pushing a swing so the child has a chance to indicate "more"

Don't anticipate needs - if the child needs help with something, wait until they indicate this to you via eye gaze at you, handing the object to you etc. Then you provide the model. E.g. the child tries to open a drawer that is stuck. Wait a few seconds and then say 'open'. Wait for the child to imitate or blow up a balloon and slowly deflate it, then hold the deflated balloon up to your mouth and wait.

Offer choices - offer the child a choice between two objects. This provides them with a model to attempt. It is also better than asking yes/no questions as the child gets practise in using other words. E.g. hold up bubbles and a ball and say "bubbles or ball?" Wait for the child to request one.

