**Communication Ideas for Home**



* Follow your child’s lead while they play. Join in with what they are already doing and use simple words to talk about it.
* Collect some everyday items together, put them out in front of your child and see if they can find the things you ask for e.g. where’s the cup, find the toothbrush. If they find this hard take photos of the items on your phone and show them a photo as you ask them to find it.
* If your child is currently using PECS at home to communicate then carry on. Try and increase the situations you use their system in, try and add more pictures to their book if they are ready to request a wider variety of motivators.
* Use motivating toys such as light up toys or wind-up toys. Encourage your child to look at them with you and share the enjoyment, encourage your child to look between you and toy to communicate they want more, perhaps they could sign or say ‘more’. Pause when you say ‘ready steady’ and encourage your child to look at you or vocalise to indicate ‘go’.
* See if you could find matching objects or pictures around the house and encourage your child to put matching things together.



* Observe and wait rather than anticipating your child’s needs. For example if they find it hard to open a packet of crisps rather than doing this for them straight away, wait and see if your child gives you the packet or looks at you to indicate they need help. You could set up opportunities for this by putting motivating items in hard to open containers or out of reach.
* Watch Something Special and Mr Tumble together and see if you can both learn any new Makaton signs.
* ****Do something unexpected or make a mistake and see how your child communicates this with you. You could try putting on the wrong coat, using a toothbrush to brush your hair or try to unlock the door with a banana. You could also set up similar communication opportunities by leaving things out e.g. give your child a yoghurt and forget a spoon and see how they let you know your mistake.

**How do you use a ‘Ready, Steady, Go!’ Game?**

* Decide on the activity that you are going to use with your Ready Steady Go sequence. You can play a specific game (like skittles) or you can fit it into your everyday routine (like running to the bedroom for a bedtime story).
* To begin with, the adult is the talker. Let your child know what the action is (e.g. 'We are going to run to the next tree'), but tell them they must wait for ‘Go’ first (e.g. ‘But you have to wait till I say ‘Go’ before you run, OK?’). Say ‘Ready…(pause)…Steady… (pause)… Go’. When you say ‘go’ everyone does the action (e.g. runs to the tree). The game continues like this. (You can change the action if you want at any time – e.g. you might decide to hop or jump to the next tree, or run backwards).
* You can also encourage your child to talk. You say ‘Ready … (pause) … Steady … (Pause) … and the chances are your child will jump in and say ‘Go’. If they do this, then Go. When they are ready, your child can be the talker and give the whole instruction.
* You can add variation to the game by increasing the length of the pause between Steady and Go to make your child wait and wait… by changing the activity and by making it a competition (e.g. first one to the tree wins).
* If you are using the game as part of your everyday routine, it will probably serve as a useful motivator (it’s much more fun to go to bed when you are racing to get there, and more fun to throw clothes into the washing machine when it is a game). This way, you will probably only say Ready Steady Go once to get one action. Use it on lots of different household activities – but try not to overuse otherwise it will lose its value as a motivator.

**Ideas for encouraging Vocalization**

**Aims**

* to encourage child to make noises with his/her voice
* to babble
* to initiate babble with an adult
* to have babble ‘conversations’

**Activities**

Exciting Toys

Exciting toys can help elicit sounds. Toys that have an element of surprise are most likely to make a child vocalize. Whenever your child does so, accidentally or intentionally, reward him immediately.

Examples of suitable rewards are cuddles, physical contact, bobbing-up toys, buzzers and flashing lights. Accompany these with verbal praise. It is sometimes helpful to keep a few objects especially for rewards so your child learns to make the association between vocalizing and being rewarded.

Imitation of your child’s vocalization

When your child babbles, make eye contact/get within his visual field and copy him to help him learn that what he does has an effect on what you do.

It is important to imitate any sound your child makes so that he understands his/her sounds get a reaction and starts having early ‘conversations’ with sound.

Representational Noises

Encourage your child’s use of symbolic noises by modelling/using the noises yourself as below:

* using sounds that are associated with feelings in appropriate situations

e.g. Oooooooooooh! (e.g. when hurt)

 Mmmmmm! (e.g. tastes good)

 Ahhhhhhhhhh! (e.g. when bubbles go up)

 Grrrrrrrrrrrr! (e.g. when pretending to be angry)

 Shhhhhhhhhh! (e.g. when putting teddies to sleep)

Accompany these sounds with appropriate gestures, facial expression

and exaggerated intonation.

- using sounds to accompany actions and events e.g. pnone ringing, car
 braking, water splashing, wind blowing, hammering

- make appropriate noise when playing with toy animals, cars, trains etc.
 Encourage your child to join in and copy you.

Telephones

Encourage use of vocalisation by pretending to talk on toy telephones or having puppets/action figures talk to each other. This is also good for practising turn-taking in conversation.

Singing

Singing and laughing are other ways of encouraging vocalization. Sing simple songs with babble words and encourage your child to join in) e.g. la la la, nonsense sounds).

Mirror Work

Use a mirror large enough for 2 people. Make silly faces and noises together (e.g. raspberries, lip-smacking noises, talking through pinched nose).

**Making Choices**

* Try to increase the number of opportunities for your child to communicate **with** you.
* Creating lots of opportunities for choice making most easily does this.
* For example allow your child to choose:
* What he wants to eat,
* What video he wants to watch
* Which toy he wants to play with
* To play inside or outside (weather dependent)
* What clothes he would like to wear
* Whether he wants to brush his teeth or his hair first
* What toys he would like in the bath
* Which story he would like read to him
* Which piece he wants to put in the puzzle first ……

Choice can be incorporated into just about every activity you do with your child. Allowing him to choose shows him the value of communicating with you – when he tells you what he wants, he gets it, that he does in fact have some control over you and his environment.

* Most of the time this choosing will be just between 2 choices. In this case, it is easiest just to hold up the 2 objects (or objects representing the activities) and say, ‘What do you want? *X* or *Y*?’ This way you are providing a model for your child to copy and therefore encouraging him/her to use the true word.

* **Waiting -** try not to anticipate his needs. Let your child get a little frustrated before you step in to solve the problem or to help. Try to wait for a look towards you or a change in sound before you step in. Let your child know that you have stepped in because he looked at you or because you heard him ask for ‘help’ (just a slight change in vocalisation will do). Tell him ‘Mummy help’. Over increase the time your child has to wait before you step in to help.

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**Understanding and Use of 'More’**

**Aim**

For the child to link the word/sign/symbol for more with the repetition of a favourite activity or object (e.g. more tickles, more biscuit)

For your child to be able to say/sign/give a symbol to request ‘more’ and the activity they want more of (i.e. using specific vocabulary).

**Developing Understanding of ‘More’**

When your child wants more of something – say ‘More?’ with an exaggerated intonation. Then give him some and say ‘more’ or ‘more tickles/bubbles/biscuit’ (whatever he is having more of).

You can show him a symbol and/or sign in addition to saying the word ‘more’. Gradually encourage him to say/sign/exchange a picture or symbol.

**Using ‘More’**

Think of the opportunities throughout the day that your child has where he enjoys objects or activities manipulate those opportunities so that you create the need for him to request more. Some ideas are listed below.

You may need to move your child’s hands to make the sign for more (one hand is a fist and the other hand covers the top of the fist) if he does not copy you or give a symbol/picture to exchange. Encourage him to do this until he does so by himself.

Bubbles

Blow a few bubbles. When they have all burst, say ‘more?’ and blow some more. After a few times, leave a gap between the time the bubbles have popped and the time you ask ‘more?’ Gradually, wait until your child to asks.

Rough and Tumble

Any activity the child enjoys can be used to elicit ‘more’ (e.g. rough and tuble, being tickled, being chased, being pushed on a swing, singing a song, etc.).

Moving Toys

Using a wind up toy, musical box, spinning top, etc., the child has to ask when he wants it to move again.

Puzzles

Give your child a simple lift-out puzzle to do, but pass him one piece at a time. Give him the next piece when he asks for ‘more’.

Single Word Games: Activities to practise using words/signs

These activities can be used for children who sign, point to pictures/symbols or eye point. Use them to practise using vocabulary (note – children must understand the names of objects and actions before they can use them).

These games can be adapted to use with a choice of two (items/pictures) or more.

**1. Spider Game**

Use/draw a picture of a spider on a small piece of paper. Select several items or pictures relating to the words the child is currently learning.

Ask the child to hide their eyes or turn around then hide the spider under one of the objects/pictures. The child has to name the item for you to lift it up and see if the spider is under that item or picture.

If the child has memory difficulties, take away each item that doesn’t have the spider under it after they have named it. This will help make it a naming game rather than a memory game.

**2.  Shopping Game**

You need a set of objects/pretend food and relevant pictures or symbols.

The child has to give the adult (or another child) instructions for what to buy at the shop.

**3.  Make up symbols to match characters/items in a story book**

Encourage the child to show you the appropriate symbol as you read the book or sign the appropriate sign.

e.g. The Hungry Caterpillar  caterpillar, apple, strawberry, sick

**4.  Choosing a book**

Have a key symbol/sign/object for several books (e.g. caterpillar for The Hungry Caterpillar, mouse for The Gruffalo). Encourage the child to choose/sign a word to choose which story.

**5.  Simon Says**

Have some action pictures/symbols. Once the child is able to link signs/pictures to everyday actions, play Simon says. Show the child what to do by saying “Simon (or use your own name) says \_\_\_\_\_” as well as signing/pointing to a symbol. Reverse the roles to have the child tell you what to do (by saying/signing/pointing to a symbol or picture).

**6.  Kim’s Game**

Place x number of objects on the table. Take one away and see if the child can point

to the relevant symbol or make an appropriate sign. A smaller number of objects is

better for children who have difficulty remembering.

**7.  Things you like/don’t like**

e.g. Food pictures – the child has to point to the relevant symbol or sign the name of

what they like/don’t like

**8.  Barrier Game**

Put a barrier (e.g. a big book) between the child and you. Use picture pairs for the words you are working on or make pairs of symbols and have one set each. You

make a sign and the child finds/points to the symbol. Point to the symbol/picture you

said/signed and take the barrier away. Are you both pointing to the same

picture/symbol?

Then reverse roles.

**9.  Packing a suitcase – to work on topic vocabulary**

Decide what would be appropriate to pack for the place in your topic work (e.g.  healthy foods for lunch, clothes for a particular season). Encourage the child to sign

and or say their choice.

**10.  Pairs Game**

Make pairs of symbols and have one set each. The child’s cards are face up, yours

are face down. You choose a picture but do not show the card. You tell the child the function of the object (e.g. “you cut with it” or sign ‘cut’). The child has to point to or

sign the relevant object.

Remember! You can reinforce vocabulary comprehension (understanding) and expression (use) throughout the day by modelling the words the child is learning as he/she looks and plays with items and by offering him/her choices.

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(for spider game)