

Early Communication

STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION



Sabotage:

This technique is to deliberately interfere with the successful completion of an activity. For example, hide a piece of the puzzle or take the batteries out of a toy. You may also give your child an item other than the one he/she wants. For instance, you may give your child a carrot when he wants a cookie. This creates a situation to encourage your child to use words/signs to communicate his/her wants and needs to you. After you have prevented your child from completing the activity, encourage him/her to use words/signs to indicate what he/she wants.

Self-talk:

Self-talk is a running commentary about your actions. For example, while you are driving the car, you can say things such as, "I'm going to stop," "I'm going to go." or "Mommy is putting on her seat belt."

Sign Language:

For a temporary solution, sign language can be used in order to reduce frustration levels with a child who has a speech disorder or language delay. It is a good opportunity to communicate wants and needs through gestures and pointing.

Supplementing Adult's Verbal Speech with Signs/Gestures

To help your child understand what you are saying, use gestures and/ or point as you talk. For example, if you are asking your child if he/she wants a drink, you might say, "Do you want a drink of water?" as you use the sign for drink or point to the sink.

Using Object with/instead of Word

Prompt your child to point to an object along with saying the word or instead of saying the word if they are having difficulty talking.

Using Touch Cue with the Sound

Touch cues can help your child remember how to say sounds and improve better sound production. These physical cues often involve touching the face near the mouth.

Violating Expectations

Purposely alter your child's routine without predictable warning (ex. Put on your child's shoes and then get his socks to put on).

Wait and See

After asking your child a question, pause and give him/her time to respond.

Withholding an Object to Get the Desired Response

To obtain a desired response from your child, withhold an object from him/her until you receive the desired response.

Speech Therapy for Toddlers Cheat Sheet

SELF-TALK

Talk about what you are doing, seeing, eating, touching, or thinking when your child is present. Narrate your actions - for example, "I'm washing the dishes. Now, I'm drying them. All done."

PARALLEL TALK

Talk about what your child is doing, seeing, eating, or touching. Narrate what he/she is doing - for example "Johnny's building a tower. Wow, that's a big tower!"

FOLLOW THE TODDLER'S LEAD

Talk about your child's interests. For instance, if your child is playing with a baby doll's hair, talk about the hair; if he/she is looking at a dog, talk about the dog. Acknowledge the child's words, phrases, and actions by responding verbally or through gestures. Model or copy their actions, and then repeat and restate what they say. Be responsive to what he/she does or says, even if it's not a real word.

QUESTION A LITTLE, NOT A LOT

Don't overwhelm your child with too many questions. Remember to balance questions with comments. As a rule of thumb, saying three comments before asking one question.

PAUSE IN ANTICIPATION

Wait three to five seconds after speaking to give your child a chance to respond. Show that you are waiting expectantly by raising your eyebrows, smiling, and opening your mouth.

SENTENCE COMPLETION TASKS

This technique is best suited for older children, or those who have stronger comprehension skills. Try pairing verbal cues with visual or tactile input. For example, when giving him/her a shirt, say, "Here's your shirt. Put on your ____." Additional prompting may include the use of phonemic cues. A phonemic cue is when you give the first sound of the target word. They help children retrieve words and say them quicker. For example, while giving him/her the shirt, say, "Here's your shirt. Put on your sh____."

CHOICES

Give your child choices: "Do you want to eat crackers or grapes?" or "Do you want the cow or the horse?" Doing so puts indirect pressure on the toddler to respond by presenting him/her with a concrete choice.

OOPS!

During a routine, forget something essential or skip an important step. Most children know when a routine has been violated and like to point it out.

GESTURES, PANTOMIME, OR SILLY SOUNDS

Use gestures, pantomime, or silly sounds to help the child understand your intentions. If you want his/her rubber duck, make the quack-quack motion with your hands (four fingers come together to touch the thumb) while saying "quack-quack."

SET IT UP

Set up a scenario so that the child has to ask for help or assistance. Give the child a difficult box or bag to open, or give him/her a task you know they may struggle with, so that you can encourage the child to ask for help.

EXPAND

Add grammatically correct information to your child's meaningful yet incomplete utterances. If your child says, "boy run," you could say, "Yes, the boy is running." Add in the missing words.