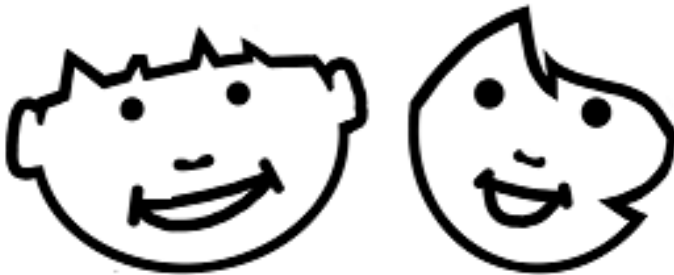




Strategies to Develop Early Communication Skills



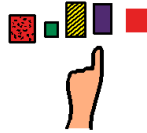
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Create Opportunities for Communication

Some children need lots of practise in telling you what they want, so it is important to create lots of reasons and opportunities for them to communicate everyday:

- ◆ Put favourite things out of reach, but in view, so that your child has to let you know they want it. They might pull you to it or look at you or say a word.
- ◆ Offer food and drink a little at a time, so that your child needs to indicate to you that they want More. 
- ◆ Put little things that your child likes into containers that they can't open, but can see what's inside. Your child now has a reason to communicate they need Help. 
- ◆ Don't anticipate your child's needs ~ Wait (try counting to 10 in your head) so they have the opportunity to let you know what they want.

Give Choices



- ◆ Try to show two things, whenever possible and expect your child to make a choice. Hold up an apple and crisps, for example and say: "Do you want apple or crisps?"
- ◆ Stress the key words and wait for your child to look at the item or reach for it, make eye contact or say the word. When your child has indicated a choice, name it again as you hand it to them "you want apple"
- ◆ Your child might find it easier at first to make a choice between something they like and something they don't like rather than two favourite things.



Simplify Your Language

Children need to hear very simple language to help them "tune in" to your communication and develop their understanding, so:

- ◆ Say Less ~ just use key word and very short phrases.
- ◆ Stress the key words so that they stand out for your child.
- ◆ Repeat, Repeat, Repeat ~ children need to hear words several times in order to understand and use them.
- ◆ Use words that relate to the object or toys that your child is currently focussed on. It is important to make sure they are looking at an object before you label it, e.g. if you are giving them a cup don't say 'here's your cup' if your child is focussed on a car ~ *get their attention first.*

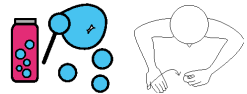


Use People Toys

People toys are those which need an adult to operate them, like bubbles, balloons or wind up toys:

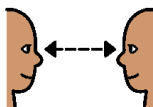


- ◆ Blow bubbles then put the lid back on or blow up a balloon and let it deflate or wind up a toy and let it go and then Wait for your child to let you know they want "More." They might put the toy in your hand or look at you or say a word.
- ◆ Model "More" or "More Bubbles" every time you play the game.
- ◆ Respond to your child's communication attempts every time so that they feel successful.



Action songs and rough and tumble activities are also good people games:

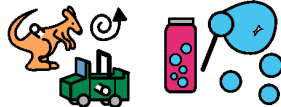
- ◆ Play 'Row Row the boat' or 'Round and round the garden' etc. When your child is familiar with the game, pause before the end so that they have to let you know they want to continue.
- ◆ When playing physical games such as tickling or bouncing, pause frequently to let them see it's Their Turn to tell you to continue ~ this could be with a reach, vocalisation or eye contact.



Set up Routines in Play

Children learn more quickly if things are clear and consistent, try to structure the way you play with toys, for example, play with the toys in the same way and keep your language the same. For example:

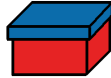
◆ "Ready, Steady, Go!"



◆ "Finished"



◆ "In the box"



Remember to leave lots of pauses so that your child becomes aware that it is Their Turn to do or say something.

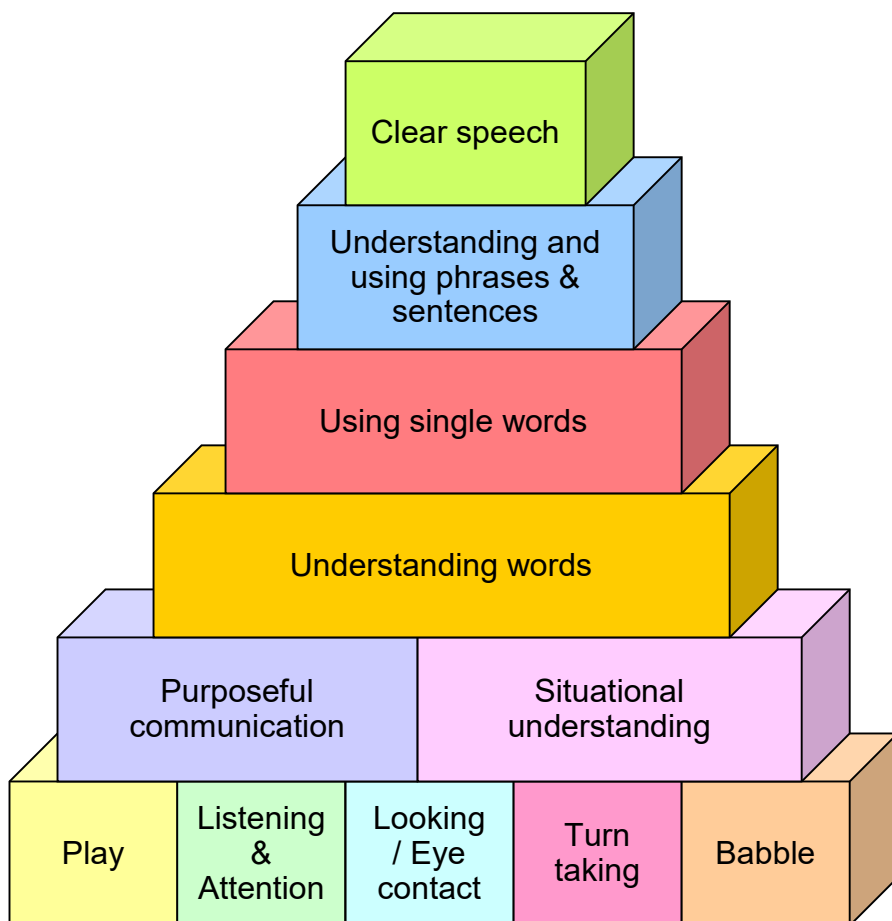
You could put a few favourite toys in a box and get this out at specific quiet times when you can encourage your child to sit and focus their attention for longer periods of time.

Draw Attention to your Face



- ◆ Try to hold up items near your face whenever you can as this will encourage your child to look up at you.
- ◆ Exaggerate your facial expressions and stress key words in order to hold their attention for longer.
- ◆ Use toys which encourage your child to look at you more, for example, silly hats, glasses, face paints and mirrors etc.
- ◆ Most importantly, join in with your child's play, keep it FUN and respond to your child's attempts at communication ~ this may be taking your hand, making eye contact, using a sound, gesture or word.
- ◆ Look and Wait for your child's subtle ways of expressing their needs and try to respond to them quickly so that your child knows their communication attempts are successful.





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