



FIRST WORDS Project Infant Toddler Play Group

Session 2: Responding to Your Child's Communication

To help your child say and understand new words and concepts, try to do the following:

Talk, talk, and talk some more

- ⊙ Use a variety of pitches
- ⊙ Speak slowly
- ⊙ Speak clearly
- ⊙ Use simple words and short phrases

Get face-to-face

- ⊙ Make sure you are face-to-face with your child by sitting on the floor with your child, laying on the floor with your child, or sitting your child on the couch while you sit on the floor.

Wait

- ⊙ It takes children a little longer to understand your message and then to respond with gestures or words.
- ⊙ Try silently counting to 5 after you ask a question or make a statement to give your child time to respond.
- ⊙ Give your child time to make requests. Try not to over interpret your child's communication attempts or over anticipate his or her needs.

Take turns

- ⊙ Try to let there be an equal number of communication turns between you and your child.

Talk about what child is looking at or interacting with

- ⊙ Your child will learn best when you show interest in what your child is interested in at that moment.

- ⊙ Talk about the things your child is looking at, touching, and playing with.
- ⊙ Make important words stand out. Try putting important words at the end of your sentence or changing your voice to emphasize the important words.
- ⊙ Instead of asking a lot of questions, let your child know about what he or she is experiencing. Let your child know what you are thinking and experiencing.
 - "Wow...that's a big fire truck"
 - "I wonder what's inside"
- ⊙ Change topics as your child changes interests.

Take what you get

- ⊙ Respond to any attempt your child makes at communicating including facial expressions, gestures, sounds, and words.
- ⊙ Interpret what your child is trying to tell you. Say what you think your child means.
- ⊙ Do not expect perfect articulation. Young children often do not say words exactly the way adults do.

Have a goal for learning

When interacting with your child, think about what you want your child to learn from this activity (e.g., turn taking, new gestures, sounds, or words, new motor skills, new concepts such as up/down or big/little).

When helping your child say and understand new words and concepts, try to AVOID conversational stoppers:

1. Monopolizing the conversation. Not giving the others an opportunity to speak.
2. Being distracted and disinterested.
3. Avoiding eye contact and looking away.
4. Giving brief responses with no new information.
5. Bombarding with questions.
6. Not waiting for an answer when you ask a question.
7. Not talking about the same topic as your conversation partner.
8. Changing the topic of conversation inappropriately.

FIRST WORDS Project

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