

Communication Strategies



Teacher Implementation Checklist Part 2



After you're comfortable doing Part 1, use these Part 2 strategies next to help support child communication during play and routines.

1. Responding to Communication Attempts

- I respond to all communication attempts (words, sounds, gestures, looks).
- I treat all attempts as meaningful communication.
- I respond immediately and give the child what they are communicating for, when possible. *(e.g., during playtime, child points to or says "ball" → adult gives the child the ball)*

2. Creating Communication Opportunities

Note: these don't have to be used all at the same time. Select the ones are appropriate for your activity.

- I briefly hold on to materials to encourage the child to communicate to request them
- Preferred items are visible but not freely accessible when appropriate to encourage child to request them
- I pause and wait for communication instead of anticipating the child's wants or needs *(e.g., adult holds up bubbles and waits → child points and says "buh" → adult blows bubbles)*
- I break activities or snacks into smaller parts so the child has opportunities to request *(e.g., adult provides a few Goldfish crackers → child requests "Goldfish" → adult provides more Goldfish)*
- I intentionally set up activities to encourage communication and interaction
- I do not use these strategies when a child is upset or distressed

3. Teaching in the Moment

- I provide brief prompts (gestures, model, words) only when needed to support the child
- I give just enough support to help the child communicate, then reduce my help when they show success
- Multiple moments for communication are embedded within play or routines
- I reinforce communication naturally (the play activity continues, the child gets the item they requested, etc.)

4. Monitoring & Adjusting

If communication is limited, I consider adjusting:

- my language complexity
- more wait time for the child to communicate
- the activity or materials to increase child motivation
- access to preferred items
- level and type of adult support
- number of communication opportunities
- I monitor whether communication increases over time



Reflection

What is working well?

What is one small change to try next?

Reminder!

Communication strategies work best when they are:

- natural
- responsive
- embedded throughout the day
- focused on connection and participation

The goal is **more communication opportunities**, not perfect speech.