

FAMILY VERSION

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S COMMUNICATION AT HOME



Simple ways to encourage communication during play and daily routines

How Do Young Children Learn to Communicate?

Young children learn to communicate best during **everyday interactions** — while playing, eating, getting dressed, and spending time with people they care about.



You don't need special materials or long teaching sessions. Small changes in how adults **interact, respond, and wait** can make a big difference.



Ways to Encourage Communication at Home



FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD



Let your child choose the toy or activity



Join what they are already doing and imitate their actions



Get down on your child's level

Children communicate more when they are enjoying the activity.

MAKE INTERACTIONS FUN AND ENGAGING



Smile and show interest



Use a warm, encouraging voice



Take turns during play and simple games

Positive, playful interactions invite communication.

USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE

 Talk about what your child is doing

 Use short phrases your child might copy

 Repeat and add on to what your child says or does

Example:

Child pushes car →
Adult says, “Car zooms!”



RESPOND TO ALL COMMUNICATION

 Respond to words but also sounds, pointing, gestures, or looks

 Children are still developing language, so treat all attempts as meaningful

Example: Child says “juh” →
Adult says, “Juice!” → Adult gives child the juice



This helps your child learn that communication works.

Creating Opportunities for Communication

You can gently set things up so your child has a reason to communicate.

Try:

- **In sight, out of reach:** place favorite items where your child can see them but needs help to get them. This creates an opportunity for them to communicate for it
- **Shared control:** hold an item and wait for your child to look, point, or ask for it, then give it to them



- **Waiting:** pause during routines and give your child time to respond
- **Breaking it up:** give small amounts of snacks or toy pieces at a time so they request more of it
- **Activity setup:** leave out an important item (like a spoon for cereal) so your child needs to ask you for it



These moments create natural chances for communication.

What This Looks Like at Home

- During playtime
- At snack or meals
- While getting dressed or ready for bed
- Outside or on walks
- During everyday routines



Communication practice happens **all day long**, not just during “teaching time.”

If Your Child Is Communicating Less

Try:

- using fewer words
- waiting a little longer before helping to give them a chance to try
- offering choices
- reducing distractions
- responding more consistently to their attempts to communicate



Small changes can lead to big improvements.



Reminder!

Communication includes **words, sounds, gestures, and looking.**

The goal is:

- connection
- confidence
- participation

Not perfect speech.



Adapted from: Bruinsma, Y., Minjarez, M. B., Schreibman, L., & Stahmer, A. C. (2020). Naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions for autism spectrum disorder. Brookes.

