



Top Ten Tips for communicating with your child

Every interaction you have with your child is a form of communication. It's not just about the words you say: The tone of your voice, the look in your eyes and the hugs and kisses you give – all convey messages to your child. The way you communicate with your child not only teaches them how to communicate with others, it shapes their emotional development and how they build relationships later in life.

(UNICEF For Every Child – Article: How to communicate effectively with your young child - 9 ways to strengthen your bond through your words and actions)

- 1 Close contact** - creates a calm connection, so that you can attentively listen and talk together. Getting down to a child's level in a moment when they need it, can really help them to communicate with you.
- 2 Eye contact** - is a social skill which allows your child to pick up on facial expression, mouth movements and gestures, setting the mood and tone for communicating.
- 3 Full attention** - minimise distractions (turn off phones, computers, and televisions), turn taking shows respect and allows conversations to flow. Put dummies/ pacifiers away to ensure that your child clearly hear the sounds that you are using and allows them to form the shape of sounds and words with their mouths.
- 4 Active Listening** - encouraging smiles, affirming nods help children to feel heard and understood – have fun mirroring your child's facial expressions.
- 5 Allow time to respond** - try waiting ten seconds to allow your child to think and gather the words needed to respond.
- 6 Commenting** - try to avoid questions - use comments instead such as 'I can see you are using the red cup' or 'Wow! Your dinosaur has sharp teeth!'
- 7 Try** - talking about what your child is doing or repeating what your child has just said and adding a new word! Try modelling words to your child rather than correcting them, if you child says 'tat' you could say 'yes it's a cat'.
- 8 Everyday opportunities** - such a walk to the park or trip to the supermarket allows you to introduce, share and explore new words together i.e., helter-skelter, pomegranate. Follow your child's interests and ask them what they would like to do today by offering a choice.
- 9 Bilingual children** - encourage your child to speak to you in their home language, allow them to build their vocabulary and words – English will develop in time... Give the child opportunities to communicate in different ways – using gestures and pointing to pictures
- 10 Role Model** – your child learns how to communicate by watching you carefully! Playful fun activities, songs, nursery rhymes, stories, sensory and imaginative play can be particularly good for exploring new language.

Tiny Happy People
www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people
Better Health – Start for Life
www.nhs.uk/start-for-life

For more top tips please visit
leicestershire.gov.uk/services-for-children-aged-two-years-to-starting-school

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