

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS EARLY COMMUNICATION IDEAS

Goal	Description	Examples / Ideas
Attention and concentration	The child is able to look at an object or activity and concentrate on it - he listens to sounds and turns towards them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold brightly coloured toys near him and encourage him to look at and follow the toy. • Encourage him child to look at the object for longer by doing interesting things with it. • Sometimes selecting a toy that interests your child will help. Children like toys that are brightly coloured, make noises and feel nice.
Eye contact	The child looks at other people and objects with interest and learns that getting a person's eye-contact (getting the other person to look at you) is a way of getting their attention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to get the child to look at you during communication and encourage her when she does so. • Children love looking at their parents' faces and love hearing the sounds of their voices. Try getting your child to concentrate on your face by using happy and bright facial expressions, singing, blowing raspberries, talking and smiling.
Imitation	The child copies actions, for example, clapping hands, blowing raspberries and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some children love imitation games. If she is doing an action, copy it and play games around it. For example, if your child is banging her hands on her tray, you can copy and sing 'Everybody banging'. • Start off by imitating your child. This helps children understand imitation and increases the chance that in the future, they will imitate you.

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	eventually making sounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy any sounds that he makes with his mouth to encourage him to have another turn • Other things to imitate are coughs, laughing, clapping, and kissing.
Turn taking	The child takes turns by waiting, listening, looking and doing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games that will involve turn-taking, such as rolling a ball, putting objects in a container, building with blocks. • Encourage your child to take turns in games, even if you need to help him to have his turn When the child makes a sound, copy it and encourage him to have another turn • Always allow enough time for the child to have a turn - children with disabilities often take longer to respond, so allow even more time than usual
Object permanence	The child learns that something still exists even if it can't be seen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hide a toy under a scarf and gradually show it. • Play 'peek-a-boo' games with your hands or a scarf – cover your face for a moment then reveal it and say 'boo' - help the child to remove the scarf from your face, or her own, to play the game. • Hide fun toys behind your back and then slowly reveal them. Talk about what you are doing. For example, 'Where is the Teddy? Where has he gone..... Here he is!'
Cause-effect	The child understands that if he does something there will be a result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the child to play with toys and show her what happens when she does something - act excited about what she has done. • If a child finds playing with toys a difficult task, ask an occupational therapist for information about how to modify the toys. • Give your child lots of opportunities to play with toys where, for example, pushing a button creates music.
Anticipation	The child learns about events and knows when they are going to happen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the child what you are about to do and talk about what is coming next - young children learn a lot from routines. For example, bathtime, mealtime, dressing, bedtime, playtime. • Help the child to learn about routines by doing things the same way each time. If he always hears water running before a bath, he may learn that this sound means bath time. • If you always show him the car keys before going for a drive - he may learn that seeing the keys means you are about to go for a drive in the car.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing songs and rhymes that have an exciting ending. For example, ‘this little piggy’ and ‘round and round the garden’. Your child may learn to anticipate the tickle at the end. You should <i>pause</i> before giving the end tickle and observe your child’s reaction (facial expression, body movement etc) to see if they can anticipate what will happen next.
Active communication	The child makes choices, indicates what they want and shows likes and dislikes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold up objects and encourage your child to choose between them. • Let your child know that you understand what he is trying to ‘say’ when he uses gestures, pointing, body language and so on -say what he wants. • Notice when your child expresses his likes and dislikes through facial expression, vocalisations and body movements (for example, by turning away from an object).
Choice Making	A child indicates what they want.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may indicate choice with facial expression (smiling, frowning, crying), actions (pushing toys away or holding them), pointing, reaching for or looking at what they want. • To begin with, you may need to present toys to her one at a time and allow her to look, touch and hear the toy then tell you if she likes it or not with facial expression and hand movement. Later she may be able to reach and look at the toy she wants when you hold two up.

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