

# Using a Surprise Box with your child

Using a Surprise box will help your child to develop their attention, listening, looking, turn-taking and waiting skills. These skills are important in helping your child to learn language and follow instructions. Using a Surprise box will also help your child to learn how to ask for things and to make choices.

## How to make a Surprise Box:

You will need a box (e.g. shoe-box) with a lid. Cover this with shiny paper or decorate it with stickers to make the box look exciting! Put a variety of exciting visual, noise-making or moving toys in the box. For example, bubbles, a giggle stick, a rain-maker, wind-up toys, musical boxes, pop-up toys, spinning tops and so on.



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## How to use a Surprise Box with your child or a group of children:

- Sit on the floor and encourage your child to sit in front of you.
- Remind your child to do "good sitting" and "good looking"
- Hold the surprise box on your lap and sing "What's in the box? What's in the box? Let's look, let's look. What's in the box?" (...to the tune of "the farmer's in his den").

(Continued on the other side)

## How to use a Surprise Box with your child or a group of children (continued):

- Check your child is looking at you and then with lots of anticipation and an excited voice take out one of the toys out of the box.
- Name the toy and start it working (e.g. blow some bubbles; shake the rainmaker).
- Encourage your child to stay sitting and do “good looking”. Try not to let your child touch the toy but rather sit and watch the toy. Wait for the toy to come to a natural stop, or else stop the toy yourself (e.g. stop blowing bubbles).
- When the toy has stopped you could:

Put the toy back in to the box and then do the same thing again. Start by singing the song “What’s in the box?...”.

*OR*

Ask your child if they would like “more” of the toy (e.g. “more bubbles?”). Wait for your child to tell you they want “more” by looking at you, vocalising or reaching. Then restart the toy (e.g. blow some more bubbles).

- Once you have shown your child several toys, you could offer them a choice. Hold up two of the toys and name them (e.g. “bubbles or spinning top?”). Ask your child what they would like. (e.g. “Mary wants....?”).



- Wait for your child to look, make a sound or word, point or reach towards one of the toys. Show your child you are listening by repeating back the name of the toy they have chosen (e.g. “Bubbles. You want bubbles”) and show them the toy they have chosen.

**You can do Surprise box with small groups of children. Encourage the children to wait their turn to ask for “more” or make a choice.**