

Gravesham Early Years Specialist
Teaching & Learning Service



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Stages of Communication

Communication happens when one child sends a message to another child.

This can be verbally or non-verbally.

Interaction happens when two people respond to one another - two-way communication.

Own Agenda

Does not yet understand that they can affect other people by sending a message directly to them.

Communication largely pre-intentional.

The Requester

Beginning to understand that they can ask the adult to do things by pulling or leading them.

Likes playing physical people games like tickles or peek-a-boo.

The Early Communicator

Consistently uses the same gesture, sound or word to ask for things they like.

Joint attention is established. Will share interests by looking at something and then back at the parent.

The Partner Stage

Enjoys interactions with other people, able to have short conversations about their own interests.

Conversations sometimes break down because they can't understand what the other child is saying.

Sometimes plays alone because they are unsure of what to do and say.

Adopt strategies that give children a reason to communicate, following a child's lead and helping children to understand.

Supporting communication development

Follow their lead

Rather than directing them. They will be more likely to pay attention to the activity, more likely to focus on the same thing as you, and will learn how to make choices for themselves.

Label

Use single words to communicate with them. For example, label their favourite toy and repeat that word when they reach for it.

Use expansions

Add in one more piece of information to what they say. For example, if they say 'car', you can reply 'yes, big car'. That way you are only giving them one more piece of information to process.

Time to communicate

It is tempting to help by constantly doing things for children. For example, fetching their shoes and tying their shoelaces, bringing a biscuit. However, this may reduce opportunities for them to communicate.

Be face-to-face

Be face-to-face so that you can more easily observe what they are interested in.

Imitate

Imitate the child's actions and vocalisations. If they bang the spoon on the table, and you do the same, it is likely that they will pay attention to you. Also imitate actions.

Once the child has noticed that you are imitating their actions, they may begin to imitate back. This creates the opportunity for you to add something new to the exchange for the child to copy.

Gestures and visual supports

Use to support understanding.

Use songs

Sing songs with them, pausing to see if they can sing the next part. You may need to prompt them with a sound cue.

Give a reason to communicate

You can engineer situations to create an opportunity for communication and interaction.

Encourage requests

Place a favourite toy/in a place where the child can see it but is unable to reach it. This will encourage the child to ask for help and result in an interaction.

Find opportunities to interact

Take opportunities as they arise during their play.

