

Working With a Non-Verbal Wish Kid



Encourage play and social interaction when working with your wish child. Children learn through play and interactive play is a great way to communicate with the wish child.



Position yourself in front of the child and close to eye level, so it's easier for the child to see and hear you.



Gestures and eye contact can build a foundation for language. Use both your body and your voice when communicating. For example, extend your hand to point when you say, "Look," and nod your head when you say, "Yes."



When you ask a question or see that the wish child wants something, pause for several seconds while looking at the child expectantly. Watch for any sound or body movement and respond promptly.



Always simplify your language. This will help the wish child follow what you're saying more easily.



Rather than interrupting your child's focus, follow along with words. For example, you might say, "Shape" when he holds up the shape and say, "Dump shapes" when he dumps them out to start over.

Websites for More Information

[Tips for Communicating with People with Little or No Speech](#)

[Help Your Nonverbal Child With Autism Speak](#)

Initial Wish Interview Tips

Parents as Advocates:

- Parents may be defensive or distant
- Respond with sensitivity and compassion

Medical Equipment:

- Medical equipment may be in the child's room
- The child may look unwell
- Prepare yourself in advance

Volunteers' Importance:

- You are an integral part of our team
- Your role will impact the wish child for a long time



Do

- Consider the child's abilities when choosing an ice-breaker
- Brush up on appropriate terminology
- Consider appropriateness of word choice
- Model your communication/questions in same manner as parents/legal guardians
- Use the Communication Profile(s) as a guide



Don't

- Talk to the parents only
- Rush the wish child
- Suggest wish ideas
- Use the word "impaired"
- Only use open-ended questions – reframe to yes/no, when needed

Open Ended vs. Yes / No Questions

If you do not receive a clear answer, try reframing your question into a "yes/no" question.

Example: Look around the room and identify any clues from the environment. If the child is dressed in a pink shirt and has a pink blanket on her lap, instead of asking, "What is your favorite color?" perhaps phrase the question, "Do you like pink?"