

# Activities to support & increase communication whilst at home

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The following activities can be used for children with autism and / or learning disabilities of any age. Activities can be adapted so that they are age appropriate

They can be adapted for any level of skill whether your child is non-verbal or able to communicate in full sentences.

All activity ideas are based on Speech and Language Therapy interventions provided by this therapist and colleagues.

# Choice making

No matter the level your child may be at, offering choices is a great way to provide communication opportunities and develop their independence skills.

All our young people have a way of indicating like or dislike whether this be facial expression (e.g. smiling), gesture (e.g. pushing away), using a photo or symbol or verbally.

Here are some ways you can integrate choice making into your child's daily schedule:

Schedule task	Choice Activity	Ideas
Breakfast	Choice between 2 favoured cereals	Show 2 cereal boxes holding them out for your child to choose from – using simple language e.g. “Billy choosing”  Give your child the item they look towards, reach for or verbally indicate
Getting dressed	Choice of clothing	Great for preparing for adulthood.  Bring a selection of clothes for your child showing 2 options at a time.  Hold up clothes and ask child to “choose”. Wait for response through reach, eye-gaze or facial expression.  For our young people who are working at a sensory level allow them to feel the material to support their choice-making ability.
Activity time	Choose an activity	Using an object of reference ask your child what they would like to do.  Objects of reference can include: ball, puzzle box, spatula for cooking, paint brush for painting, DVD for TV
Lunch	Drink	Similar to the cereal at breakfast time offer a choice of drink by holding up 2 choices e.g. juice or water
Activity time	Cooking activity	Baking a cake together?  Get your child to choose which ingredient gets added next

# Turn-taking

Learning to take turns is an important social skill and the foundation of conversation. Turn-taking can be modelled and supported through these home friendly activities:

- ▶ Rolling a ball back and forth between each other
- ▶ Taking turns to build blocks/Lego in a tower
- ▶ Taking turns to complete a simple puzzle
- ▶ Taking turns to pour sand/water from a cup in sensory play

Use simple language to label the turns e.g. “**my turn**”, “**Sarah’s turn**”

Support your language with a gesture – tap to chest whilst saying “my turn”

Take any consistent response from your child as an attempt to communicate – vocalisation, gesture, verbal response or just looking at you in anticipation.

# Ready, steady, go

Ready, steady, go games can be used to build joint attention and help your child initiate communication.

When participating in an activity that you know your child enjoys leave pauses and allow them the opportunity to request more. This can be done by them engaging **eye-contact** with you, **reaching** towards you, using a **gesture** for go (tap downwards), **vocalising** or **saying** the word “go”.

Example:

- ▶ Blowing bubbles – Say “ready, steady, go” with a gesture and then blow

Other activities:

- ▶ Throwing a ball or balloon
- ▶ Pull back cars
- ▶ Knocking over block towers

# Matching tasks

Children will understand objects and their function at an early age. The next stage is photos, followed by symbols/line drawings and then the written word.

Many people with Autism may not progress through all stages and may remain at the object or photo level of understanding.

To help support your child's understanding of photos you can create matching tasks with them. Photos from magazines can be used to create simple matching tasks. Show your child an item e.g. an apple and then show them the photo of an apple. Do this with a few items. Then help your child to match the photos for themselves.

Start with a small amount 2 or 3 photos at a time. Once mastered you can move to matching photos with symbols/line drawings.

# Intensive interaction

Intensive interaction is particularly beneficial for our non-verbal children but can be used with anyone with autism to support their social communication.

The idea is to enter your child's world instead of expecting them to always enter ours.

Set aside 5-10 minutes to simply be with your child. When they make a vocalisation or movement you repeat it. Continue doing so for each sound or action they do.

Examples of intensive interaction can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9c-WQqYUdE>

# WH questions?

What?, When?, Who?, Where?, How?

WH questions can help to increase both vocabulary knowledge and understanding for our verbal children.

These can be incorporated when taking walks or during activities at home.

Examples of WH questions can be found here:

<https://www.home-speech-home.com/wh-questions.html>

# Sequencing

Help your child to learn routines or carry out an instruction through sequencing tasks.

This can be incorporated into daily routines e.g. brushing teeth, bathing or getting dressed.

It can also be used during fun activities such as baking a cake.

Use objects, photos or drawings to help your child understand what order things are done in.