



# Strategies to facilitate communication

Have you been finding it difficult to communicate with your child?

Some children with additional needs may need an adapted approach when talking to them, when asking questions or when trying to explain something.

## Suggested strategies for the adult

- Keep background noise or other distractions such as the television, radio or games to a minimum when talking to your child
- Sit in close proximity to them and try your best to make initial eye contact
- Use their name first to gain their full attention before engaging in conversation
- Speak slowly and announce your words carefully
- Use short, concise sentences to ensure that your child does not become confused
- Try to use objects, photos and pictures to match what you're talking about as a visual aid
- Try to use gestures and pointing when talking if appropriate
- Let your child process and make sense of what you have said or asked before expecting a response. It may take 5-10 seconds before they respond (you can count this in your head if it helps). If your child is still not responding, repeat the statement/question again
- Try not to become frustrated or change your tone of voice as this could create feelings of anxiety and confusion for your child
- Check their understanding by asking "do you understand?" and ask them to repeat back what you have told them/asked them to do
- If they do not understand, repeat what you have said. If they still do not understand, rephrase what you have said, using different, simpler words or phrases
- Praise any attempts the child makes to communicate
- Join them in their play or game, taking their lead and showing them you are interested in what they are doing
- Try using their favourite characters or interests to encourage them to talk to you about them



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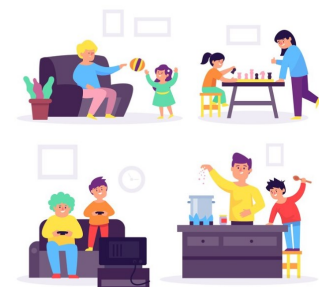
## Suggested strategies for the child

Some children may be aware they have difficulties with their communication; and recognise that they may need some strategies **themselves** to help facilitate communication. These may take time and practice.

- Talk to them about their difficulties with language. Identify strengths and celebrate these! Identify areas of difficulty too, and explain that there are things they can do to help
- Encourage them to say if they have not understood something. This could be a verbal comment or a hand gesture e.g “Say that again please”, “What do you mean?”, “I don’t understand”
- Encourage them to ask the speaker to slow down if they are speaking too quickly e.g “Can you slow down please?”
- They could repeat the command/question aloud
- Post-it notes, lists or picture notes (visual aids) can help to remember things such as what they should be doing next or where they are going. They might also act as a prompt to ask an adult a question
- Encourage them to point to objects, photos and pictures to match what they’re talking about as a visual aid



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