FREE FAMILY GUIDE

Everyday Talk

A Free Family Starter Guide

Five simple activities to encourage communication through play and everyday routines.











Spoken language | Sign language | Gestures & pictures | AAC

START HERE

Quick-Start Guide

You do not need special toys or extra time. The best moments to communicate are the ones you already share: snack time, play time, getting dressed, and reading together. Here are five simple ideas to use in every activity.

1. FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST

Notice what your child is looking at, reaching for, or playing with. Join in. Talk about that thing. Your child is more likely to communicate about something they care about.

2. MAKE COMMUNICATION EASY TO ACCESS

Get your child's attention before you communicate. A gentle tap, a wave, or moving into view all work. Get down to their level. Keep your face and hands easy to see. Turn off the TV or music. Use hearing technology the way your child's audiologist recommends.

3. MODEL A SHORT MESSAGE

Say, sign, or show a short, useful message, like "More bubbles!" or "Help, please." If your child uses pictures or a device (AAC), touch the symbols as you talk. You are showing how to communicate. Your child does not have to copy you.

4. PAUSE

After you model, wait. Count slowly to five in your head. Look interested and keep your hands still. This quiet moment gives your child time to take a turn, in any way they can. If they don't, that's okay. Keep playing.

5. RESPOND TO ALL COMMUNICATION

A point, a reach, a sound, a sign, a look, a word, or a tap on a picture all count. Show your child you understood. Then add a little: Your child reaches for the cup. You say, "Cup! You want the cup."

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE ARE NOT THE SAME

Speech is how we make the sounds of words with our mouth. Language is the words or signs we know and how we put them together to share ideas. A child can have a lot of language and not use speech. Signs, pictures, gestures, and AAC are all real ways to use language.

EVERY WAY COUNTS

Ways children communicate: looking, reaching, pointing, gestures, facial expressions, sounds, words, signs, pictures, and AAC (devices or boards).

In this guide, messages are written in English so they are easy to read. If your family signs or speaks another language, share the same meaning in your own language, with its own word order and grammar. This guide does not teach signs.

ACTIVITY 1

Bubbles

Bubbles are a fun way to take turns, ask for more, and share excitement.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: A bottle of bubbles with a wand.

1. Sit across from your child at a table or on the floor, so your child can see your face and the bubbles.
2. Blow a few bubbles. Watch them float and pop together.
3. Hold the wand still and wait. Let your child show you they want more, in any way.

WORDS & MESSAGES

ACTION **Blow!**

REQUEST **More bubbles**

COMMENT **Pop!**

DESCRIPTION **Up high**

REFUSAL **All done**

YOU CAN MODEL

- As the bubbles float up: "Up, up, up!"
- When your child pops one: "Pop! You popped it!"
- Before you blow: "Ready... blow!"
- If your child turns away: "All done. Bubbles are all done."

Say it, sign it, or show it on AAC, in the language your family uses.

PAUSE & NOTICE

- Lift the wand to your mouth, then stop. Wait to see how your child tells you to blow.
- Close the bottle and set it down in view. Wait to see if your child asks for more.

RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Your child reaches up toward the bubbles.
You: "Bubbles! Big bubbles up high."

Your child: Your child signs or says "more."
You: "More! More bubbles." Then blow right away.

ACCESS TIP

Put the wand down before you talk, so your child can see your face and hands. Bubbles go up, and your child's eyes will follow them. Wait until your child looks back toward you before you share the next message.

ACTIVITY 2

Snack Time

Making a snack gives your child real reasons to choose, ask, and help.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: Two or three soft fruits (cut by an adult into safe sizes for your child), small bowls, and one big bowl.

1. Put the small bowls of fruit on the table where your child can see them.
2. Help your child pour fruit into the big bowl. Hold the bowl together if needed.
3. Take turns choosing what goes in next.

WORDS & MESSAGES

ACTION Pour it in!

COMMENT Banana

REQUEST More, please

REFUSAL Not that one

SOCIAL Yummy!

YOU CAN MODEL

- While pouring the bananas: "Pour it in!"
- Pointing to the bowls: "Blueberries or strawberries?"
- When the bowl is empty: "All gone! The bananas are in."
- Tasting together: "Mmm, yummy. Sweet banana."

Say it, sign it, or show it on AAC, in the language your family uses.

PAUSE & NOTICE

- Hold up two bowls and wait. Let your child look, point, reach, or name the one they want.
- Start to pour, then stop halfway. Wait to see if your child tells you to keep going.

RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Your child points to the strawberries.
You: "Strawberries! Red strawberries in."

Your child: Your child pushes a bowl away.
You: "Not that one. No blueberries right now."

ACCESS TIP

Sit next to or across from your child, with the food between you, at the same height. Then your child can see the fruit and your face at the same time. Turn off kitchen noise, like a fan or the radio, while you talk.

ACTIVITY 3

Building Blocks

Building and knocking down towers is full of turn-taking, action words, and fun surprises.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: A few blocks of different colors and shapes. A low table or the floor.

1. Sit across from your child with the blocks between you.
2. Take turns putting blocks on the tower.
3. When it falls (or gets knocked down), share the moment and build again.

WORDS & MESSAGES

ACTION On top

DESCRIPTION Tall tower!

SOCIAL My turn

REQUEST Help, please

COMMENT Uh-oh!

YOU CAN MODEL

- Placing a block: "On top. The block goes on top."
- Holding out a block: "My turn... your turn."
- When it falls: "Uh-oh! It fell down!"
- Looking up at the tower: "Wow, tall tower!"

Say it, sign it, or show it on AAC, in the language your family uses.

PAUSE & NOTICE

- Hold out a block and wait. Let your child reach, point, or take it to tell you they want it.
- Before you knock the tower down, hold your hand up and wait for your child's signal to go.

RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Your child sets a yellow block on top.
You: "On top! Yellow block on top."

Your child: Your child laughs when the tower falls.
You: "Uh-oh! It fell. That was funny!"

ACCESS TIP

Keep the tower to the side, not between your faces, so it doesn't block your face or hands. Building on a low table, like in the picture, helps you both see the blocks and each other.

ACTIVITY 4

Looking at Books Together

Talk about the pictures your child likes. You don't need to read every word.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: A picture book your child enjoys. Books with animals, people, or everyday things work well.

1. Sit close, side by side, so you can both see the pages.
2. Let your child turn pages and choose what to look at.
3. Talk about what your child points to. It's okay to skip pages.

WORDS & MESSAGES

SOCIAL Look! · COMMENT Zebra · ACTION Turn the page · DESCRIPTION Big elephant · REFUSAL All done

YOU CAN MODEL

- Pointing to the giraffe: "Look! A tall giraffe."
- Turning the page: "Turn the page... what's next?"
- Pointing to the hippo: "The hippo is in the water."
- When your child closes the book: "All done. Book is all done."

Say it, sign it, or show it on AAC, in the language your family uses.

PAUSE & NOTICE

- Hold the corner of the page and wait. Let your child show you when to turn it.
- Point to a picture, make an excited face, and wait for your child to share the moment.

RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Your child points to the zebra.
You: **"Zebra! The zebra has stripes."**

Your child: Your child makes a sound and pats the lion.
You: **"Lion! The lion is lying down."**

ACCESS TIP

Sitting side by side helps with the pictures, but makes your face harder to see. Hold the book a little lower and turn toward your child when you talk. Or lift your hand from the page before you sign.

ACTIVITY 5

Getting Dressed

Dressing happens every day. Offering small choices helps your child take part and communicate.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: Two shirts (or socks, pants, or shoes) your child could wear.

1. Hold up two shirts where your child can see them both.
2. Let your child choose by reaching, pointing, looking, signing, or saying.
3. Talk through each step as you help them dress.

WORDS & MESSAGES

REQUEST This one

DESCRIPTION Yellow shirt

ACTION Arms up

REFUSAL Not that one

SOCIAL Ready!

YOU CAN MODEL

- Holding up the shirts: "Yellow shirt or teal shirt?"
- Putting the shirt on: "Head in... arms up!"
- If your child pushes a shirt away: "Not that one. Okay!"
- When dressed: "You're ready! Teal shirt on."

Say it, sign it, or show it on AAC, in the language your family uses.

PAUSE & NOTICE

- Hold up both shirts and wait. Give your child time to look, reach, or tell you.
- Hold the shirt over your child's head and pause. Wait to see if your child pulls it down or tells you "on."

RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Your child reaches for the teal shirt.
You: **"This one! You want the teal shirt."**

Your child: Your child shakes their head at the yellow shirt.
You: **"No yellow. Yellow shirt stays here."**

ACCESS TIP

Clothes going over the head block your child's view. Wait until their head is through and they can see you before you talk. If your child wears hearing devices, follow your audiologist's advice about when to put them on while dressing.

Keep the Conversation Going

Every routine in your day is a chance to connect. You don't need a script. You need a moment, a little patience, and your attention.

EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION REMINDER

- Get your child's attention first, and keep your face and hands easy to see.
- Follow what your child cares about.
- Model short, useful messages: asking, saying no, commenting, and greeting.
- Pause without pressure. You don't have to ask questions all the time.
- Respond to every way your child communicates, and add a little more.

WANT MORE IDEAS?

Everyday Talk: The Complete Family Activity Collection from Approach Education builds on this guide. It includes twenty everyday activities, richer examples, ways to adjust each activity for your child, and reusable planning and observation pages. You can keep using the five activities here on their own, every day.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide supports everyday family interaction. It does not replace individual evaluation, therapy, or services. If you have questions about your child's hearing, communication, or development, talk with your child's doctor, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, or early intervention team.

Sources for the guidance in this guide

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). What Is Speech? What Is Language? www.asha.org/public/speech/development/speech-and-language/
- ASHA. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A Parent's Guide to Hearing Loss. www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children-guide/parents-guide/
- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD). Cochlear Implants; Hearing Aids. www.nidcd.nih.gov

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