FREE CHRISTMAS & WINTER SAMPLER

Everyday Talk

Winter & Holiday Moments

Three playful activities to connect, communicate, and build language.








3 holiday activities

Speech, sign language & AAC

Free family sampler

QUICK START

Quick Start: How to Talk Together

Winter brings lots of moments to share: getting dressed, baking, building, and cozy story time. You don't need special tools. Use these ideas in every activity.

FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S INTEREST

Notice what your child looks at, reaches for, or enjoys. Join in and talk about that.

GET ATTENTION FIRST

Move into view, wave, or give a gentle tap. Wait until your child notices you, then share your message.

KEEP EVERYTHING EASY TO SEE

Get down to your child's level. Keep your face, hands, the objects, and any AAC in view. Face the light, not a bright window.

MODEL SHORT MESSAGES

Say, sign, or show one to three words, like "Hat on!" or "More snow." If your child uses AAC, touch the symbols as you talk. Your child does not have to copy you.

PAUSE WITHOUT PRESSURE

After you model, wait. Count slowly to five in your head and look interested. If your child doesn't take a turn, that's okay. Keep playing.

RESPOND TO ALL COMMUNICATION

A look, reach, point, sound, sign, picture, AAC tap, or word all count. Show your child you understood.

ADD ONE SMALL IDEA

Repeat your child's message and add a little: your child points to the star. You say, "Star! Yellow star."

HONOR "NO," "STOP," "BREAK," AND "ALL DONE"

When your child says or shows no, stop, break, or all done, respect it right away. This teaches that their communication works.

QUICK START

Quick Start: Access, Comfort & Safety

IF YOUR CHILD IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Hearing aids and cochlear implants help, but they do not guarantee full access to speech. Your child may still miss words, especially outdoors, in wind, or in noisy rooms.
- Follow your child's own communication and hearing technology plan from their audiologist and team.
- Every child is different. Some families use spoken language, some use sign language, and many use both. Use what works for your child.
- Ask your audiologist how to protect devices from snow, moisture, and cold, and how hats and helmets should fit over them.

DURING CRAFTS, BAKING, AND BOOKS

- Your child's eyes can't be on the activity and on you at the same time. Let them look back and forth.
- Pause your talking or signing while your child is looking down at their hands or while their view is blocked. Share your message when they look up.

EVERY WAY TO COMMUNICATE IS WELCOME

Spoken language, sign language, gestures, pointing, pictures, and AAC all count. Never require speech or eye contact, force your child to copy you, or hold back food, comfort, or favorite things to get a message.

SAFETY BASICS

- Food: Stay with your child. Cut food to safe sizes, and check for allergies. Use dough that is safe to handle raw. Adults handle ovens, stoves, and other heat sources.
- Drinks: Let warm drinks cool to a comfortable temperature before your child touches or sips them.
- Snow and sleds: An adult should always watch. Choose a gentle, open slope away from roads, trees, and water. A helmet is recommended. Dress in warm, dry layers and come inside if your child gets cold or wet.

YOUR FAMILY, YOUR TRADITIONS

Enjoy the traditions that fit your family. If you don't celebrate a holiday, adapt the activity or skip it. Respect your child's sensory preferences, too: noise, lights, textures, and cold.

> This resource supports everyday interaction. It does not replace individual evaluation, therapy, or services, and it can't promise that a child will talk. Every child grows in their own way.

ACTIVITY 1 OF 3

Holiday Cookie Helpers

Rolling dough and pressing cutters give your child real jobs and lots to talk about.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: Cookie dough labeled safe to eat without baking (no raw flour or raw eggs), a rolling pin, and cookie cutters.

1. Roll the dough flat together on the table.
2. Take turns pressing cutters into the dough.
3. Lift the shapes out. An adult puts them in the oven.

WORDS & MESSAGES TO MODEL

ACTION Roll · ACTION Push it down · COMMENT Star · DESCRIPTION Flat · SOCIAL My turn · REQUEST Help, please · REFUSAL No more · SOCIAL Yum!

YOU CAN SAY, SIGN, OR MODEL

- While pressing dough: "Push it down!"
- Rolling together: "Roll, roll, roll. Flat!"
- Lifting the yellow star cutter: "A star!"
- Pointing to the tree shape: "A tree. You made a tree."
- Seeing flour on the table: "Uh-oh, flour everywhere!"

INVITE A RESPONSE

- **Comment, then pause:** "I see a gingerbread shape." Then wait.
- **Offer a choice:** Hold two cutters: "Star or tree?"
- **Offer help:** Put your hands near the cutter. "Need help pushing?"
- **Optional question:** "Which shape next?"

NOTICE, RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Presses the star cutter and looks up.
You: **"Push! You made a star."**

Your child: Signs "more."
You: **"More cookies! One more star."**

Your child: Holds out the rolling pin.
You: **"My turn? Thank you! Roll, roll."**

MAKE IT FIT YOUR CHILD

Connect
Press cutters side by side. Any push is a turn.

Build
Model "push," "roll," or a shape name.

Expand
Add a sequence: "First cut, then bake."

ACCESS & COMFORT TIP

Pause your words while your child is looking down to press. When they look up, share your message. Some children dislike sticky dough. A spoon or cutter works too.

SAFETY

The CDC advises that children not play with dough made with raw flour. Choose dough labeled safe to eat raw, or use play dough for a pretend batch. Wash hands, check for allergies, and let adults handle the oven.

ACTIVITY 2 OF 3

Build a Snow Friend

Building a snowman together means rolling, stacking, and decorating.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: Snow, plus a hat, scarf, sticks, small rocks, and a carrot.

1. Roll snow into balls and stack them.
2. Take turns adding the face: eyes, nose, and smile.
3. Add a hat, scarf, and stick arms.

WORDS & MESSAGES TO MODEL

ACTION Roll · DESCRIPTION Big · COMMENT Nose

ACTION On top · REQUEST More snow · REQUEST Help me

REFUSAL Not there · SOCIAL Hi, snowman!

YOU CAN SAY, SIGN, OR MODEL

- Rolling snow: "Roll, roll. Big ball!"
- Stacking: "On top. Up it goes."
- As your child adds the carrot: "Nose! Orange nose."
- Wrapping the scarf: "Purple scarf. Warm."
- Stepping back: "Hi, snowman!"

INVITE A RESPONSE

- **Comment, then pause:** "He needs a smile." Then wait.
- **Offer a choice:** "Rocks or carrot next?"
- **Offer help:** "I'll hold the snowman steady."
- **Optional question:** "What should we name him?"

NOTICE, RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Pushes the carrot in.
You: **"Nose! You gave him a nose."**

Your child: Points to the basket.
You: **"The basket. More rocks for the smile."**

Your child: Says "hat!"
You: **"Hat! Yellow hat on top."**

MAKE IT FIT YOUR CHILD

Connect
Pat snow together or hand over decorations.

Build
Model "on," "big," or "nose."

Expand
Add a sequence: "First eyes, then nose."

ACCESS & COMFORT TIP

Mittens make it hard to sign and gesture. Use simple gestures, point, and show the real objects. Take warm-up breaks inside when hands get cold.

NO SNOW? NO PROBLEM!

Build a snow friend from large paper circles, play dough, or pillows. Add a real hat and scarf.

ACTIVITY 3 OF 3

Look at the Lights

A walk to see the lights is full of colors, shapes, and things to point out.



TRY THIS TOGETHER

You need: Warm clothes and a neighborhood or place with lights.

1. Walk slowly together after dark.
2. Stop when your child notices something.
3. Crouch down and share what you both see.

WORDS & MESSAGES TO MODEL

SOCIAL Look! · COMMENT Lights · DESCRIPTION Blue · DESCRIPTION Bright · COMMENT Deer · ACTION Stop · REQUEST Let's go · COMMENT Wow!

YOU CAN SAY, SIGN, OR MODEL

- While looking at lights: "I see blue lights!"
- Pointing to the reindeer: "Two deer. A big one and a little one."
- Looking at the tree: "Lights on the tree. So bright!"
- Pointing to the door: "A wreath on the door."
- Starting to walk: "Bye, lights. Let's go!"

INVITE A RESPONSE

- **Comment, then pause:** "I see something sparkly." Then wait.
- **Offer a choice:** "This street or that street?"
- **Offer help:** Hold out your hand. "Hold my hand?"
- **Optional question:** "Which lights do you like best?"

NOTICE, RESPOND & ADD

Your child: Points at the house.
You: **"Lights! So many colors."**

Your child: Stops walking and stares.
You: **"You want to stop. Let's look."**

Your child: Signs "wow" or says "ooh!"
You: **"Wow! The deer are glowing."**

MAKE IT FIT YOUR CHILD

Connect
Stop where your child stops. Look where they look.

Build
Model "look," "lights," or a color.

Expand
Add a location: "The deer are by the door."

ACCESS & COMFORT TIP

It's dark outside. Stand where light falls on your face, not behind you, so your child can see you. Get close and face your child. Some children find blinking lights too bright, so watch for signs to take a break.

NO LIGHTS NEARBY?

Look at lights inside your home, a lit window, or a flashlight on the wall. Name the colors together.

KEEP GOING

Want More Winter Moments?

THE FULL PACK

Everyday Talk: Winter & Holiday Moments from Approach Education has ten activities, including choosing winter clothes, gift wrapping, decorating the tree, sledding, cozy cocoa, snowflake crafts, and winter story time. It also has a weekly planner and a communication observation page. You can keep using these three activities on their own, all season long.

ABOUT THIS SAMPLER

This resource supports everyday family interaction. It does not replace individual evaluation, therapy, or services, and it does not promise that a child will talk or reach a certain goal. Talk with your child's doctor, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, teacher, or early intervention team about your child's needs.

References

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