

Communication Temptations

Why do we use Communication Temptations?

Communication temptations can encourage a late-talker to begin to talk, a toddler start to combine two-words together, or create opportunities for a child with autism to begin communicating.

<http://www.talkingkids.org/2011/07/communication-temptations-how-use-your.html>

Communication temptations work because they allow children to think, act, or react. They motivate preschool children to express their wants and needs and can create opportunities to communicate beyond requesting and protesting. <http://livespeaklove.com/2012/02/09/communication-temptations/>

Communication temptations also give children the opportunity to be the **initiator** of communication, rather than a responder to questions or to requests to talk.

As well-meaning parents, anxious for our children to speak, we often rely on questions to tempt them to talk (e.g., "What's this?"; "Are you colouring?" "How many cars do you have?"). We also command them to talk (e.g., Say "ball"). These types of interactions naturally set our child up to be a *responder* in a conversation rather than an *initiator*.



svgcuts.com

- For late talkers, answering questions is often not very motivating and can sometimes be stressful for these little ones, who are still trying to figure out how language works. Even more frustrating for everyone, a child may not try to answer our question, prompting us to ask another question, which he also may not answer.
- Questions also tend to limit a child to one word answers (e.g., car, yes/no, two), which does not give him the opportunity to practice using other words he already has, try out new vocabulary, or start combining words together.
- Being **told** to say something might get a child to say a word, but does not teach them the true value of communication or how to initiate and maintain a social interaction. These foundation skills will support further learning, the ability to communicate beyond requesting and protesting, and experience the pleasure that comes from communicating with others.



languagefix.wordpress.com

Using communication temptations gives a child more practice being the **initiator** of communication. If your child is already talking and initiating, then communication temptations can be used to give your child practice with new vocabulary, combining words together, communicating for different reasons, or trying out different grammatical elements (e.g., I/he/she, a/the, is/are, verb + ing). <http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/how-to-make-communication-temptations-really-work/>

Communication is about more than Words...

If your child is not yet talking, try to remember that communication is about more than words. Sometimes when children communicate, we are so focused on waiting for words, that we miss their communication *attempts*.

As adults, we successfully communicate non-verbally every day, using gestures and body language (e.g., rolling our eyes, pointing, shaking our head). Very young children are often use these too! They may use facial expressions and gestures (e.g., reaching his arms up to be picked up, waving goodbye, pointing, or using baby signs such as “more” or “milk”). These may be combined with sounds and word approximations to interact with you. Our priority is to support your child in learning to communicate. If he is not yet talking, focus on *how* and *what* your child is communicating rather than on his words. Focus right now on giving your child as many opportunities as you can to practice being the initiator of **communication**. This will help him feel more confident with communicating and may encourage him to try something new, like a sound, word approximation, or a two-word phrase!



www.popsugar.com

<http://marendataylor.com/body-language-speak-volumes-without-saying-a-word/>

How to Set Up a Communication Temptation

Be Face-to-Face

During any interaction with your child, it's important to be face-to-face or at their level. Toddlers and preschoolers are small and will initiate communication more easily when they can see our face. If you can't get down to them, bring them up to you! You can do this by sitting on the couch together or at a table.



Take your time... don't rush

It takes time for communication to happen. Start by setting aside 15 minutes a day, with no distractions, to interact and play with your child. Try to get someone to look after other siblings so your child does not have to compete with them to communicate. Turn off the TV and your phone. Give your child your *full attention*. Forget about meals and housework for a while. Remember, quality is better than quantity; if you don't have 15 minutes, aim for 5 minutes. Try not to clean up around your child as he plays. Let him explore new toys and return to previous toys. Clean up at the very end of play. Of course, you can move things out of his way if they are tripping hazards or put a toy away if he has not been playing appropriately with it.



<http://photo.net/learn/basic-photo-tips/ten-family-photo-tips/>



COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION IDEAS

TIP 1: The Power of the Pause

The easiest way to tempt a child to communicate is to **wait** because waiting tempts your child to make something to happen. What are we waiting for? Two things: eye contact and communication. Then we can respond.

FIRST: Eye contact means our child is paying attention to us and ready to interact with us (i.e., to give and receive information). Try not to talk when your child is not looking at you because he is not ready to process your words. He is busy exploring and his attention is on the toy, not on language. Some children have trouble with eye contact. You may need to wait longer, get closer (i.e., lie on your stomach so you are truly face-to-face with your child), or try another communication temptation idea listed below. Don't give up. Waiting is



hard and this may be new for both you and your child!

SECOND: Once we have eye contact, then we wait some more. Now we are waiting for our child to be the **initiator of communication**. This may be a gesture, a point, a grunt, a sound, a word approximation, or a word. **Note:**

Sometimes the eyes “speak to us”— they can express a question, enjoyment, anger, or frustration. You can respond to your child’s expression as communication by interpreting his facial expression (e.g., “Oh, no!” or “fun!” or “Where did it go?” or “Help”). **Note:** Sometimes waiting longer after getting eye contact is not effective. Sometimes you will lose your child’s attention by waiting. If this is the case, respond to your child’s eye contact as his attempt to initiate communication with you. Respond to his eye contact immediately by labelling, commenting, or describing (e.g., “car” or “down” or “fast!”). **Note:** Sometimes eye contact is uncomfortable for your child and your child may look at you briefly and then look away. But if you wait, he will communicate something without looking at you. Accepting his communication without eye contact is a good first step because he is initiating the interaction with brief eye contact and then maintaining it with communication. Respecting his sensory reaction to eye contact is an important way to be tuned-in to your child’s needs. Being tuned-in and responsive is a strategy that Speech-Language Pathologists educate and coach parents on during their treatment sessions.

THIRD: We are now the responder. This is new to parents and it may feel uncomfortable at first. How do we respond? Repeat or imitate your child’s actions, sounds, words, etc. Label, comment, describe, and join in

(e.g., drink the tea, stir the soup). (Watch the Power of Play e-learning course for more information on how to do this). Wait again and see if your child will imitate your word(s). Remember: As with any new skill, communication takes time. Accept your child's attempts to repeat your words. Be positive and celebrate!

When Do I Do this Waiting Thing?

Waiting can happen pretty much any time so it's an easy one to add to your day. Plan on extra time to do be able to add it to your routine. Post sticky notes around the house to remind yourself to do it.

Start Simple:

- Watch your child play, join in, but wait before you talk.
 - ❖ **Note:** For some children, this is enough. When we stay quiet, face-to-face and wait, our child will often look at us and initiate communication to fill the silence. **How can you be an observer *and* join in?** Try not to set up the play for your child, let him explore and lead you in his play (unless it is not safe or against the rules). Watch with interest and be face-to-face. If he doesn't start to play on his own, you can pick up a toy and start to play beside him. Your child will likely be interested in what you are doing and may come to play with you, or copy what you are doing.

<http://livespeaklove.com/2012/04/18/top-five-ways-to-encourage-spontaneous-language/>

Other ways to add 'waiting' into everyday activities:

- Walk to the door to go outside and before you open it, *wait*.
- Stand in front of the fridge *and wait* (if your child cannot open the fridge door by himself).
- Hand your child his coat or shoes *and wait*.
- At meal time, give your child an empty bowl, cup, or plate *and wait*.
- Give your child a toy that requires your help to operate *and wait*.
- Give your child a colouring book, but nothing to colour with, *and wait*.
- Give your child a diaper *and wait*.
- Give your child a container that you know he cannot open on his own (like Play Dough) *and wait*.
- Bend down to pick up your child, and when your hands are almost touching him, *wait*.
- Tickle him once *and wait*.
- Put a blanket over his head and wait.
- Gently toss him up in the air, catch him *then wait*.
- Let him climb on your back or leg to play horsey ride *and wait*.
- Put him in the swing *and wait*.
- Pull the swing up to the top and before you let it go, *wait*.

- Get a favourite book with him, *and wait*.
- Hold a ball as if to throw or roll it, *and wait*.
- Stand in front of a cupboard with a child lock *and wait*.
- If he wants something that is out of reach, walk over to the shelf, *and wait*.
- Pour only a little water in your child's cup *and wait* until he drinks it all *and wait*.
- Give your child a little bit of food at a time *and wait* until he eats it all *and wait*.
- Put two snacks in two different bowls and give him one of each. Let him eat them *and then wait*.
- Put the food in large family style serving bowls on the table and give your child an empty plate *and wait*.
- Give your child food in a package he cannot open on his own, *and wait*.
- If your child likes toys in his bath, let him get into the water with no toys, *and wait*.
- Let your child get into a bathtub without water, *and wait*.
- After your child's bath is done, hold up the towel, *and wait*.
- Walk into a dark room with your child *and wait*.
- Sing a song, or do a finger play, that you always do with your child and wait before you do a favourite, well-known part (e.g., "This Little Piggy": *wait* before you, "wee, wee, wee" or "Itsy Bitsy Spider": *wait* before you make the rain come down or the sun come up or the spider crawl).
- Read books with repeated lines (e.g., *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Eric Carle). Read the book several times so your child knows the story and then read the repeated line but *wait* just before you say the last word in the sentence [e.g., "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you" (see)]. <http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?p=78>
- Look through books and just point to pictures in the book and say, "I see a _____" *and wait* for your child to tell you what you are pointing to. <http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?p=78>



COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION IDEAS

TIP 2: The Power of Routines

Routines are powerful because:

Children do them every day. Children already know what's going to happen because we tend to do the same steps, in the same order, each time. There is an expectation and shared knowledge.



<http://creativewithkids.com/>

How do you use routines to set up a communication temptation?

- Choose a routine your child knows well (e.g., Going out of the house. Your child knows, After, I put on my coat and shoes; stand in front of the door; mommy or daddy opens it).
- Instead of doing all the steps that you usually do, pick one step that you are not going to do and wait instead (e.g., Instead of opening the door, wait). This makes your child think, act, or react.
- Waiting for something to happen that usually happens and is not happening, will motivate your child to look at you and communicate.
- Remember to look at your child while you are waiting so you don't miss any form of communication.
- When he looks at you, wait some more for him to initiate communication (e.g., points at the door, grunts, makes a sound, tries to say a word).

Then respond: Give him a model of what he can do to get the door to open

- Repeat what he said – imitate, interpret, add a word (e.g., “Open”; “Go out”)
- If he says nothing, but looks up at you, give him the words to say. Say the word(s) as a statement (e.g., “open!”; “open THE door!”; “Mommy, open the door!”). Avoid rising intonation at the end of the word because it turns it into a question (e.g., “Open?”).
- How many words should I model? Rule of thumb: Use 1 word if your child is not talking, 2 words if your child is using single words, 3 words if your child is already combining 2 words together.
- Wait again for him to imitate your word(s).

COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION IDEAS

TIP 3: The Power of Being Silly and Doing the Unexpected

Nothing gets a child's attention more than mom or dad acting like a kid themselves!

- Get a puppet and cut a hole in the back of his mouth. Get your child to pick a pretend food item to feed the puppet. Use your hand and have the puppet "eat the food" and have it drop into the body of the puppet where your arm fits in. Wait and watch for your child's reaction when you open the puppet's mouth and the food is gone!
- Create sensory bins with bins of oatmeal, rice, dried beans, coloured water, or sand. Hide items to find and give him tools to dig or pour. Find out what will sink or float. Wait for him to share his discoveries with you!
- Put your child's hat on his foot, his underwear on his head, or put on your child's hat or coat yourself, and wait for a reaction. **Note:** This might upset some children if they are really rigid in their routine. You know your child best.
- Playfully take two of his cars and hide it up his sleeve or up your pant leg and wait.

Then respond: Repeat, imitate, label, interpret, comment, and join in.



COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION TIPS

TIP 4: The Power of Requesting

Requesting is often the easiest form of communication at first.

- Choose an activity that your child enjoys and is easily stopped and started (e.g., bubbles, playing with water, or being pushed on a swing)
or
- Choose an object that has many parts that you can hand to your child (e.g., crackers that he loves to eat, trains for a track, crayons for colouring, puzzle pieces, pretend Velcro vegetables for cutting, etc.).
- Start the activity, have a bit of fun (2-3 turns) and then *stop* (e.g., put the lid on the bubbles or pull him up in the swing but don't let him go) or give him *one* item (e.g., give him 2-3 crackers or one car). Wait.
or
- Set up the environment so that you create an obstacle for getting that object, but so your child can see the object (e.g., keep your child's favorite crackers on a high shelf, put the cars in see-through container that he can't open, or keep toys in a cupboard with a child lock. *Wait*.

Then respond: Repeat, imitate, label, interpret, comment, and join in. <http://www.talkingkids.org/2011/07/communication-temptations-how-use-your.html>



<http://practicalaac.org/strategy/more-on-core-words/>

COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION TIPS

TIP 5: The Power of Choice

You can almost always work a choice into anything you want a child to do. Young toddlers and preschoolers are developmentally wired to work on trying to be independent. Giving them choices gives them a way to be independent, with fewer power struggles for everyone! Choice also gives your child an **opportunity to initiate communication** with you.

"It's time to play! Do you want the ball popper or a puzzle?"

- "It's time to go outside. Do you want to walk or skip?"
- "It's time to change your diaper. Do you want to be on the table or on the floor?"
- "It's time for snack. Do you want grapes or Cheerios?"
- Get two bowls for snack time (e.g., one with bananas and one with blueberries). Give your child one of each, let her eat them, and then hold up both bowls for her to see, but out of reach, and wait for her to tell you which one she wants next (or both!). <http://www.talkingkids.org/2011/05/choices-choices-improving-behavior-and.html>



COMMUNICATION TEMPTATION TIPS

TIP 6: The Power of Motivating Open-Ended Questions

This is a great strategy if your child is already talking, whether using single words or combining words together. Using open-ended questions is a great way to motivate kids to share ideas, add to play, and use language (e.g., “What should we cook?” - when playing with the pretend kitchen, “Where should we go?” - when playing with cars). You can use this strategy when you are out and about as well (e.g., You see a plane flying overhead, “Where is the plane going?”, or out shopping, “What fruit should we buy for snack today?”). <http://livespeaklove.com/2012/04/18/top-five-ways-to-encourage-spontaneous-language/>

