

Ways to encourage early communication skills

Games to help eye contact:

Use of eye contact is an important social skill and a key aspect of communication. Eye contact allows the child to pick up on facial expression, gestures and how we are talking, including our mouth movements.

- **Peek-a-boo**
Hide behind your hands or a blanket and peek out saying “peek-a-boo”. Wait to see what happens and try again.
- **Songs**
Sing songs like “Row, row, row your boat” or “Humpty Dumpty”. At the end wait for your child to look then do it again.
- **Funny faces**
Make funny faces- screwing up your eyes or sticking out your tongue-let your child look and try again.



Games to help copying:

Children learn language by copying what they hear and see. Games, which encourage copying, should help your child to improve observation and imitation skills, which are important in learning to talk.

- **Copying sounds**
Listen to sounds your child says; copy them; they might copy you back.
- **Toys**
Copy what your child does. If your child bangs bricks, bang them too, then try building a tower.
- **Action songs**
Sing songs with actions. Encourage your child to copy the actions.
You could try: ‘The wheels on the bus’, ‘If you’re happy and you know it’ or ‘Here we go round the mulberry bush’.
See www.wordsforlife.org.uk or www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes for more songs and rhymes.



Games to help turn taking:

Conversation involves taking turns. This begins early in a child's life when a parent responds to sounds, which their baby makes. Taking turns in play will encourage your child to develop an understanding of the rules of turn taking, listening and waiting within communication.

- **Give and take**

Have two toys. Give your child one toy and keep one. Show them your toy, put out your hand to get their toy back and give them your toy.

- **You and me**

Sit facing your child and send a ball or car between you. Why not try saying "your turn" or "my turn".

- **Pop up toy**

Take turns to press the button to make the toy jump.

- **Bricks**

Take turns to put a brick on the tower. How high can you make it?

