

Speech and Language Therapy

Activities for Developing Attention and Interaction Skills



This pack has been designed by the Speech and Language Therapists from the London Children's Practice. It includes some activities and games that can be used to target key areas relating to attention, interaction, and understanding and use of language and communication.

Speech and Language Therapy is a profession focused on helping children and families in developing and supporting a child's communication skills, attention, play, and social interaction skills. Speech and Language Therapists typically place more importance on helping children engage and communicate with the world around them, not just through speaking and using language, but also through other means like signing, gesture, visuals, and shared enjoyment in interaction.

Attention and Listening Skills

The development of attention and listening skills is an essential part of the development of communication skills. Children need to develop their attention skills in order to help them learn to play with toys and others, understand words, and express themselves.

Adapt the **ENVIRONMENT**:

Reduce distractions in the environment (e.g. turning off the TV, removing distracting toys, turn off music).

Choose a time of the day to play together when you know that the child is at their most comfortable (e.g. not too tired or hungry).

Adjust **YOUR INTERACTION**:

Play at your child's level, face to face, say the child's name before you start to get their attention.

Change the tone of your voice and your facial expressions, to be excited, or different. This will make the activity more exciting and help sustain their attention.

Slow down your speech. Pause between sentences and instructions. This allows more time for children to process language.

Adapt the **TASK**:

Use visual supports. For example:

Uses gestures/ objects alongside your words;

Use timers

Use start/finish boxes. Only once activity is put into the 'finish' box then the activity is complete.

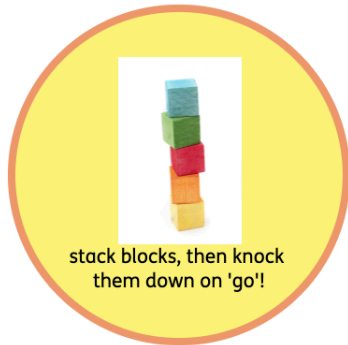
Break down instructions into smaller parts

Keep activities short and try to always finish an activity (even if the activity only lasts a few seconds).

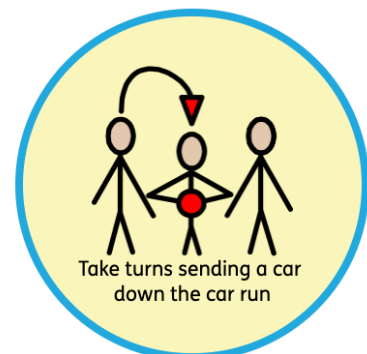
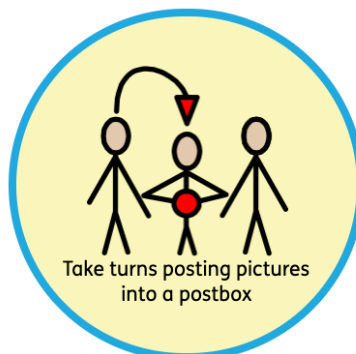
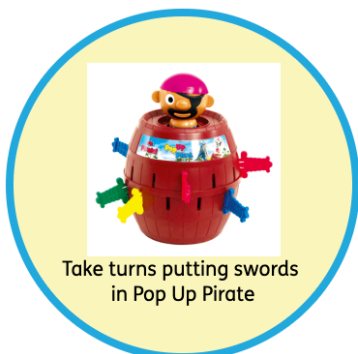
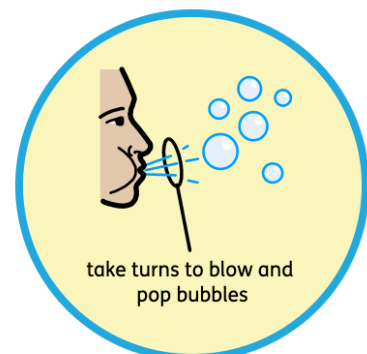
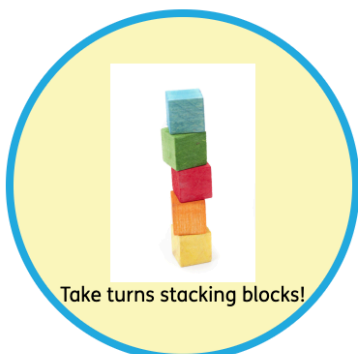
Play with toys that interest your child. Follow their lead during the play.

Activities you can do at home include:

Ready... Steady... GO! Games: Encourage your child to wait until they hear GO before each turn. Aim to increase the length of time between you say 'steady' and then 'go'. Try these activities, have your child...



Turn Taking Games: Take turns during simple games, slowly increasing the number of turns that the child is able to wait. Try these activities:



Action and Hiding Games: Play games that involve listening to or copying actions, or hiding items and having the child follow your instructions to find them! Try these activities:

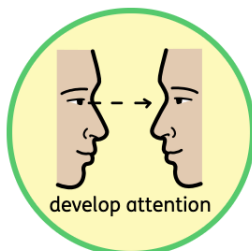
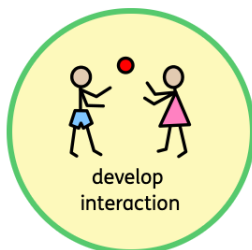


Intensive Interaction

Sometimes children are not yet able to listen and attend to someone else. They may seem to prefer playing on their own, make minimal eye contact, and may rarely respond to something that is said or done by someone else. In this case, we would first focus on building an **interest** in interaction – by being very interesting ourselves! Intensive interaction is a great tool for this.

What is Intensive Interaction?

- 'Intensive interaction' focuses on developing early communication and interaction skills. It is based on *responding to* and *copying* any noises, movements and actions made by the child.

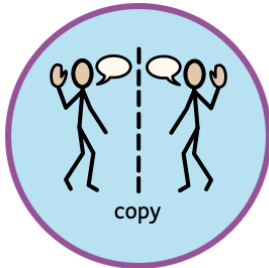
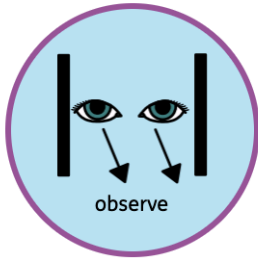


Intensive Interaction aims to build the fundamentals of communications. This includes:

- ✓ Learning to give brief **attention** to another person
- ✓ Learning to **share** attention with another person
- ✓ Developing shared attention and turning it into 'activities'
- ✓ **Taking turns** in exchanges of behaviour
- ✓ Learning to **have fun** and to play
- ✓ Using and understanding **eye contact**
- ✓ Using and understanding **facial expressions**
- ✓ Using and understanding **non-verbal communication** such as gestures and body language
- ✓ Learning to use and understand vocalisations, and have your vocalisations become more varied and extensive, then gradually more precise and meaningful

Intensive Interaction

How do we do it?



- OBSERVE your child and FOLLOW what they are doing
– make sure **they are leading** the action!

- Copy what your child is doing, this includes:
 - Imitating movements/gestures and facial expressions (e.g. banging toys; clapping hands)
 - Imitating noises - If your child is making a noise try and make the same noise.

- WAIT for your child to do it again, and then repeat. This builds turn-taking.

- Try and make a **game** out of the actions, take turns!
e.g.:- the child bangs the object/you bang the object/ the child bangs the object etc.

- Try changing the sound/action slightly. For example, if the child says “ah” you could say “ooh”. This helps to build shared attention, and encourages children to increase their range of sound production.

- Remember it should be **fun** for the child! If they indicate they dislike the interaction, you should stop.

