



TIPS for Early Learners

You play an important role in your child's play. Here are helpful tips on how to engage during play and daily routines and promote social communication development.



Get Face-to-Face: The more your child attends to the people around him, the more opportunities he has to learn language. Increase your child's attention to you by getting face-to-face with him during daily routines (like social play, meal time, and bath time). When playing with toys, position the toy between you and your child to make it easier for him to look up to your face.

One-up rule: When providing instructions or narrating play, use one more word than what your child uses. If child is not using words yet, provide one word. For example, when handing child a snack label it with one word. Instead of "Do you want a cookie?" say "cookie" and hand cookie to child. You want to try to put into her ear what you want to come out of her mouth. If a child is using one word, use two. Less language helps children tune into the most important words and connect them to their meaning.



Imitate, imitate, imitate: During play and daily routines, imitate your child's actions with toys, sounds and vocalizations, and movements. Imitation allows you to join in play and follow your child's lead, which shows your child you are a fun, helpful play partner. Once you have copied them a few times and have their attention, try showing them something new to do with the object.

Show and Tell: Increase your child's ability to understand directions by showing AND telling her. That is, pair simple language with visual information. You might "show" with an object (e.g., say "time to go" AND hand her a jacket). You might also "show" with a gesture (e.g., say "clean up" AND point to the toy box).



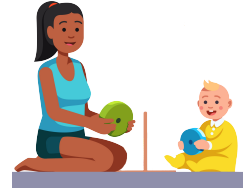
Do less, so they do more:

We want to create opportunities for your child to practice communication. Eye contact, gestures, and words are all examples of ways your child might communicate with you.

Pause a routine: Engage your child in a familiar routine, pause in the middle, then wait for her to communicate (e.g., pause in the middle of tickles, then wait for her to make a vocalization or gain eye contact to continue routine).



Provide small portions: Provide your child with only a small amount of a preferred material, then let him communicate he wants more (e.g., offer only one stacking ring at a time, then wait for him to reach for next piece).



Be a helper: Create a situation in which your child needs support, then wait for him to communicate (e.g., place a favorite toy out of reach, when he looks to you for help hand him the toy).



Offer choices: Hold up two objects for your child to choose from, then respond when she communicates with eye gaze, reach, gesture, or vocalization (e.g., hold up goldfish in one hand and a banana in the other, wait for her to reach or point to request).



QUICK TIPS!

Use Objects to Move Past Upsets:

When your child becomes upset, it may be challenging for him to calm down. In these moments, help your child “move on” by using an object to engage him in a new activity. For example, if your child begins to have a meltdown, try handing him a ball to roll or truck to push. The object can help shift his attention away from whatever was upsetting him and onto something new.

Rotate toys:

Some children can get easily distracted when there are too many materials or toys during play. You can try rotating toys weekly or monthly to increase interest and attention to toys.

Pause and count:

Be sure to give time for your child to process information. When you ask a question or tell your child to do something, count to five in your head before responding or prompting again.

Our Favorite Websites:

<https://teacch.com/resources/teacch-tips/>
<https://vkc.vumc.org/vkc/resources/tipsheets/>
<https://fitt.fpg.unc.edu/early-learning-activities-visual-supports>
<https://autismnavigator.com/family-resources/>

Our Favorite Parent Books:

-ESDM Parent Manual “An Early Start for Your Child with Autism” by Sally Rogers, PhD, Geraldine Dawson, PhD, and Laurie Vismara, PhD
-Teaching Social Communication to Children with Autism and Other Developmental Delays, Second Edition; The Project ImPACT Manual for Parents. (2019) Ingersoll, B. & Dvortcsak, A.