

Speech & language
therapy

EARLY INTERACTION

Prior to being able to communicate and play, our children need to learn how to share attention and interact with others.

Toys are just the tools or props to help the interaction and often the minimum or even no toys at all work best. Simple things are great e.g. a box; a ball; a piece of material; a cushion.

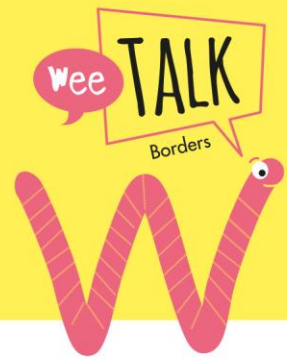
If you can develop a sense of fun and enjoyment in the interaction then they are more likely to seek out the interaction at other times.

How do we do it?

- **Look for things where they are more likely to respond. It can often be tickling/ rough and tumble type play**
- **Build on those moments and repeat them often.**
- **Get down to the child's level – it makes it much easier to establish eye contact**
- **Allow your child to dictate how long the session lasts. The minute you try to force it the enjoyment goes. At those times leave them for a few moments and try again with something else.**

Games Ideas

- **Encourage your child to touch your face or arm and make a funny noise or stick out your tongue. Make the same response every time so that they realise that the same gesture creates the same action. You can develop it by adding in a new noise on a different part of your face arm etc.**
- **When you find a good game they enjoy, stop and wait quite a while to see if they request it again. The request can be using eyes; making a sound; reaching for you. You need to respond by saying 'again?' and repeat the action.**
- **Blow raspberries on your child's hand or tummy. Wait for eye contact before doing it again.**
- **Balloons – blow the balloon up and then let it whiz round or make a noise as it deflates. Encourage the child to join in with 'ready, steady, go' before letting it go.**



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- Bubbles- try and wait for eye contact before blowing the bubbles.
- Peek-a-boo games: use a cushion/material/a box to hide your face. Make lengthy pauses to build up anticipation and try to give a space to allow your child to indicate he wants it to continue.
- Jack-in-the-box toys- these encourage anticipation and eye contact. Make your gestures and face, match the anticipation. It's exciting!!!
- Push-me, pull-me games (with a toy or their own body)
 - If they are holding a toy, and are distracted by it, try a very brief game where you hold it with them & move it up and down saying the words "up" or "down" as you move it.
 - Or if your child is facing you, hold the toy with them and push it gently towards them, saying "push". Pause for them to push against you, again saying "push". Don't worry if they don't move to begin with – pretend they are, and move away from them as though they are pushing you. Then repeat.
 - If they are not holding a toy, try lifting their legs up when lying down and place your hands against the soles of his feet ... "push" and pause to see if they indicate "again"
 - Or sway together – move with them to one side; pause, and see if they'll move the other way. Again, don't worry if they don't – pretend they are, and start the movement for them.

ALSO: Follow their lead sometimes and copy what your child does. It can feel a bit silly at times but does often get their attention. Act as if whatever they are doing is meaningful. After you have copied leave a space for him to react. A bit like a conversation!

Have fun – these can all seem like little things ... but all these little things can help with communication 😊

For more information on the Speech and Language Therapy Service (including how to request support from us) please see: <http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/slt>
Check out our Wee Talk Borders Facebook page or you can call us on 01896 82671