

## Activities to develop early Social Skills

Day to day interaction and play will develop children's social skills naturally. Children will take time to learn the rules of interaction such as turn taking and eye contact, but there are activities you can incorporate into your play which will help children understand these rules.

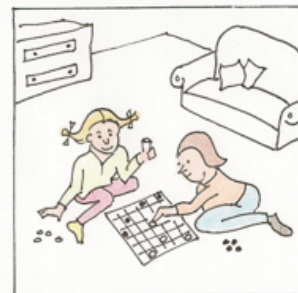
### Eye Contact

To encourage eye contact always try and get down to your child's eye-level when you speak to them. Encourage your child to be in the same room and to face you when they are talking to you. When your child communicates, respond and wait for the child's response, don't rush communication. It is important to wait because some children need more time to process the language and formulate a response. You can help cue a response by looking expectantly at your child and smiling. Try not to communicate when you are busy with something else, stop and take the time to listen and respond to your child.

### Turn-taking

Turn-taking skills usually start to develop in the first few months of life when the baby makes a gesture or noise and receives or waits for a response from the mother. The baby soon learns to make another noise or gesture when the mother responds. Turn-taking is a vital communication skill for children to learn as it is one of the basic fundamentals of positive and successful interaction.

When playing turn-taking games with a very young child it might be worth avoiding the use of pronouns such as "my, your, his, her" etc as this may be confusing. Just stick to names e.g. John's turn, Mums turn etc. Daily interaction with your child should produce lots of turn-taking opportunities. Remember to face your child, be at their level and give eye contact. Turn-taking can also be practiced with all manner of games that require 2 or more people to take turns.



Building a tower: take turns in putting the blocks on a tower until it collapses.

Blowing bubbles: take turns in blowing bubbles.

Dice and board games: this requires turns. Board games for older children are good for turn-taking skills because they have rules and structure.



Sing Nursery Rhymes: sing a familiar nursery rhyme to your child, but leave off a word or two from the end of each verse and wait expectantly to see if they attempt to sing the last words. If your child makes an attempt at the final words, resume your turn and start the next verse.

### Listening skills

You can work on listening skills by asking your child to pause and listen, and then acknowledge, when he hears a sound, such as a bird singing or a car passing.. Some children will often interrupt, it is important to calmly stop them and tell them that it is your turn to speak and they must display “good listening”.

Listening and attention skills are the building blocks of speech and language development. Some children find these skills more difficult to master than others. There are lots of ways to enhance your children's listening and attention skills, not least by turning off the television and spending some quality time with them. Try to find activities that share your attention that you can both enjoy and focus on together. Also don't forget to praise *good listening* and *good looking*.



A simple game to play for listening and attention skills is “Ready, Steady .....Go”. You can use a number of toys for this game (ball, toy car, row of dominoes, balloon), but the object of the game is to get your child to wait and listen. Get them to hold the toy ready to let it go, say “ready...steady...”, then pause and let them wait for you to say “GO” before they release the toys. You can increase the pause between words, or say “wait” before you say “GO”.

See [www.icommunicatetherapy.com](http://www.icommunicatetherapy.com) for more ideas and activities for listening and attention.

### Shared attention

Attending to something together is another good way to help your child learn. It helps children focus on what others are talking about, puts the conversation into a context and helps develop listening and attention skills. This also helps children focus on, and stay on a topic of conversation, rather than constantly changing the subject. Go for a walk and point to, look at, and talk about the things you see.





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### **Body language and using gesture**

Try to use body language and gesture when you speak. This helps the child understand what you are saying, but it may also teach them to do the same so that they can make themselves understood more effectively. Body language plays a huge part in helping others gain meaning from what we say, this is a good skill for children to learn, especially if their speech is not clear in the early years.

For more information on child development, and activities to develop speech and language skills see our website [www.icommunicatetherapy.com](http://www.icommunicatetherapy.com)



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To learn more about child development, communication, and developing your child's speech and language skills, you can read about and purchase books on our website [www.icommunicatetherapy.com](http://www.icommunicatetherapy.com). Click this link to see our online Resource Centre

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## **Suggested Reading**

**The Wonder Years: Helping Your Baby and Young Child Successfully Negotiate The Major Developmental Milestones** by American Academy Of Pediatrics (Author), Tanya Remer Altmann

**Developing Child, The** by Helen Bee and Denise Boyd

**Milestones: Normal Speech And Language Development Across the Lifespan** by Jr., Ph.D. Oller, et al John W.

**Child Development** by Laura E. Berk

**Ages and Stages: A Parent's Guide to Normal Childhood Development** by Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

**Child Development, Second Edition: A Practitioner's Guide (Social Work Practice with Children and Families)** by Douglas D Davies

**Child Development** by Robert S. Feldman

**What's Going on in There? : How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life** by Lise Eliot

**Child Development: Principles and Perspectives** by J. Littlefield Cook & G. Cook

**Let's Talk Together - Home Activities for Early Speech & Language Development** by Amy Chouinard and Cory Poland

**Born to Talk: An Introduction to Speech and Language Development** by Lloyd M. Hult and Merle R. Howard

**Speaking, Listening and Understanding: Games for Young Children** by Catherine Delamain and Jill Spring

**Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know** by Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi

**The Parents Guide to Speech and Language Problems** by Debbie Feit

**The Handbook of Child Language Disorders** by Richard G. Schwartz

**Does My Child Have a Speech Problem?** by Katherine L. Martin

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