

Communication Strategies

General communication strategies

- Adapt your communication to the developmental levels of the child
- Instructions should be in the order that they need to be carried out to aid the processing of an instruction
- Use clear “First.... Then....” Strategy, supported with visuals if required.
- Language should be supported by visuals e.g. gestures
- In most instances saying stop is more effective than saying no
- Consider children’s understanding of commonly used phrases that we use e.g. share or tidy up. Describing and modelling the actions will support development of these skills e.g. “Take turns,turn...turn” or “Put the... in the box.

Choices and Instructions

Although there are times when you need to give direct instructions, most times you can supplement this with a choice. Giving a choice is often preferable as it often reduces confrontation, careful use choices of children are more likely to engage as they are part of the decision, it develops children’s ability to make appropriate choices around behaviour and supports children’s autonomy.

Be clear with a child whether you are giving them a **choice** or an **instruction**.

Giving an Instruction:

1. Say the child’s name first (ensure child has heard).
2. Keep the instruction simple and direct.
3. Adapt tone to support child to follow instruction e.g. firm, enthusiastic.
4. Avoid being negative.
5. Allow the child time to process the instruction. (It takes 5 seconds for a 5yr old to listen, process and begin to carry out an instruction.)

“Harry...It’s lunch time, sit on your chair, please.”

Giving Choices:

- Consider “ok” options relevant to the situation e.g.
- Tidy up time – “Are you going to put cars or bricks in box?”
- Nappy change - “Are you going to jump or walk to mat” or “Are you going
- Lunch – “Are you going to eat your sandwich or apple first?”
- Repeatedly throwing resources – “let’s throw together, are you going to throw balls or scarves?”
- Getting things ready to go home – “are you going to get your bag or shall I help? “do you want to get your bag or coat?”

“Harry...It’s lunch time, are you going to sit next to Ben or Sophie?”

Top Tips

- The level of language you are using should be appropriate to the child’s level of understanding
- Remember when a child is experiencing high levels of emotion their ability to process language will likely be reduced so alter language accordingly
- Use visuals to support