

Episode 2 - Abi

Transitions

Young children are learning to communicate in a variety of ways. Here's how you can help your child to start understanding, responding to and trying their own communication.



Acknowledge your child's communication

In the early stages, communication won't be verbal. Perhaps your child looks towards something, reaches out or makes excited noises during a particular activity. Without verbalising, they are telling you something. Respond to them, just as though you were having a real conversation.

Creating a language-rich environment

- Have posters around the home with images and words on them. If your family speak two languages, try using bilingual posters.
- Read books with your child, speaking aloud and using actions to bring the stories to life. This shows your child that words don't just hold meaning; they hold fun and excitement.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes with your child. Ask your nursery what they have been singing lately so you can sing tunes your child already knows.
- Read poetry to your child. The rhyme and rhythm help them to guess what comes next and hear how words connect with each other.

Technique: Forced alternative

With reluctant speakers, you can use this method to encourage them to communicate what they want. Offer two items to your child (perhaps two options of fruit for a snack) and ask if they would like the 'apple' or 'banana'. Stress the syllables as you say it, and give your child whichever option they motion towards. Even if it's just pointing at this stage, you are rewarding your child for communicating. This helps to build their confidence for speech later on.

Active listening

Just like adults, children feel more comfortable talking when they can tell that the other person is interested.

- Summarise what your child has said back to them. This shows that you have heard and understood what they told you. They will feel more confident in telling you something else.
- Ask open-ended questions. Instead of, 'Did you enjoy your day at nursery?' ask 'What did you do in the morning?'
- Be patient. Children can take longer to process what you have asked and what they want to say. Waiting, instead of prompting them, can help children to formulate an answer in their head.