



LINDON BENNETT SCHOOL
Main Street, Hanworth
Middlesex TW13 6ST
Telephone: 020 8898 0479

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY PARENT HANDOUT

Modelling Language for Children who love music, songs, and scripts

This may apply to children who:

- Hum or sing
- May say specific scripts learned from shows
- Really love music
- Can be observed to try and sing along
- Vocalise to themselves with specific sounds
- Enjoy exploring with their voices

These children develop language by moving from whole, memorized phrases to single words. They learn through experiences, shows, and phrases they've heard repeated around them.

These children learn language through Natural Language Acquisition. It's estimated that between **75-90%** of Autistic children develop language through Natural Language Acquisition otherwise referred to as NLA (Prizant & Rydell, 1984; Blanc 2012).

What helps these children?

These children need the same approach of encouraging all types of communication (gesture, spoken language, signing, visuals). However, they learn in phrases during activities and need language modelled to them in phrases.



Below are some strategies to try with your child to encourage language development.

1. Use a sing-song voice and lots of intonation

These children often learn language well by how it sounds, through the intonation or sound pattern of the words. This includes songs.

Using more intonation or a sing song voice, can help make language sound more appealing to your child.

You could make up songs for activities that happen every day, such as brushing teeth, or walking to school.

[‘Playtime with Tor’ on YouTube](#) has lots of video ideas for how to use song in everyday routines to model language.

2. Model language using ‘I’ or ‘we’

These children learn language by copying what they have heard other people say.

We would usually say things like “Emily is hungry” or “do you want an apple?” to children.

These children may repeat this to us, repeating “do you want an apple?” when they themselves are hungry. They will not learn to use grammar and pronouns (such as I, we, you, he) until later on.

Model language using ‘I’ and ‘we’ instead of ‘you’ and their name.

You could try to:

- model language from your child’s perspective (how they would say it themselves), such as “I love cake”
- model language from a joint perspective (you and the child together), such as “we need a break” and “let’s do it again”

This will sound more natural if they copy it, and make it easier for other people to understand what they mean. This could be “I’m hungry”, ‘Time to get a snack’, or ‘Let’s get something to eat’



3. Use movement and sensory-motor experiences to make language stick

Physical movement and sensory experiences help children regulate and feel ready to interact. This is really important when we are focusing on language and communication too.

Movement and sensory experiences also provide fun opportunities for learning language! This might include:

- Swings or the slide at the park
- Building a 'den' out of cushions and blankets at home
- Dancing with your child
- Making an obstacle course at home or in the garden
- Going for a walk

4. Teach language DURING the activity

Children who learn in scripts and phrases regularly learn this language when watching a specific cartoon or if they hear a phrase said repeatedly.

Children who learn in phrases need the phrases to be modelled while they are doing something or looking at something. For example, if the child is jumping on the trampoline, the adult should say "Wow, you are jumping". This makes learning vocabulary so much more interesting and relevant to the child.

If a child is shown a picture of someone jumping on a trampoline, they may not understand the connection between the adult saying "jump" and being shown the picture.

For example: ***Bath time phrases***

- Time for a bath
- It's too hot or cold
- It feels nice
- Let's get clean
- Time to wash (body part)



- I'm splashing
- I love bubbles
- It's so fun

5. Praise and respond to every bid for connection

Some children like to make sounds to themselves, or they will say vocalisations that sound like words but are unclear.

Respond to everything they say by saying it back to them! This shows them that you heard them, see they are trying to communicate, and thus builds connection.

We want to create a positive association between attempts to communicate and shared joy!

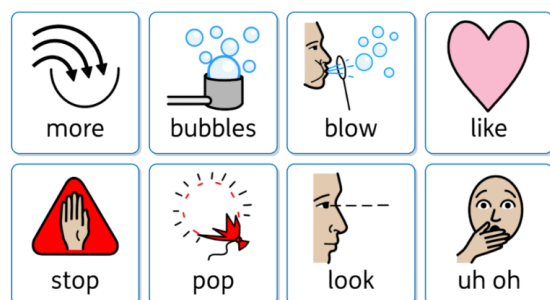
6. Use a Communication Board with phrases

Most communication boards have symbols and single words to encourage language development.

These children benefit from phrases being modelled and therefore communication boards should contain phrases that the adult will be saying during the activity. We don't just say "bubble" when we play with bubbles. We may say "let's blow bubbles" or "my turn to blow".

Example of single word communication board:

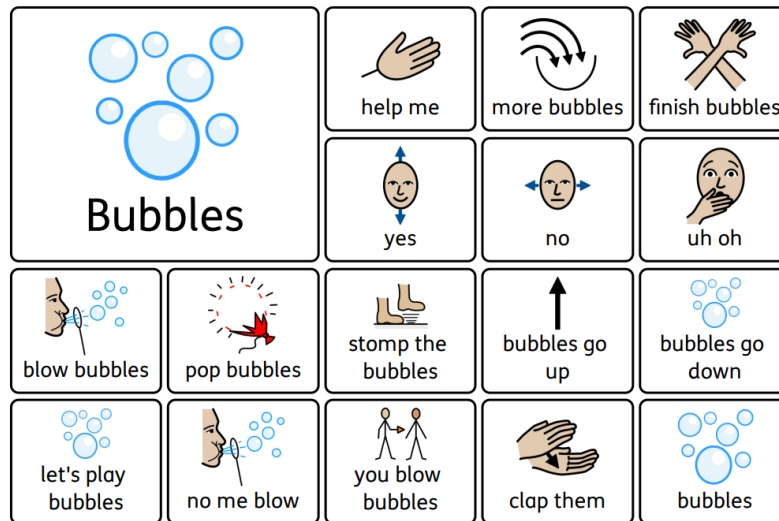
Bubbles Communication Board





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Example of a communication board with functional phrases:



Do you need communication boards?

Email the office at: office@lindonbennett.hounslow.sch.uk to request an AAC home request questionnaire and the Speech Therapy Team will email you digital resources to print and use at home.

On the Form, there is an opportunity to select specific activities that your child may be playing with such as: bubbles; playdough; water-play; nursery rhymes; balloons; foam etc.



Do's and Don'ts:

What helps:

Use short phrases (2-3 words)

Repetition: Repeat the phrase
3-5 x

Model phrases DURING the
activity

Always respond to a child's
attempt to communicate

Use a sing-song voice and
music

Use music and songs to engage

Reinforce language with visuals
and Makaton signs

What doesn't help:

Don't use vocab the child
doesn't understand yet.

Don't ignore the child's
echolalic/parrot like talking.
Respond to every bid for
connection.

Don't use long sentences. Use
simple key-word phrases.

Don't feel silly - this is a new
skill to learn!

Don't give up! Encourage each
other

Don't look for fast results. Look
for connection with the child &
have fun!

