



## **Communicating with your child with autism**

As described above, children with Autism can show a range of abilities and difficulties with communication. Professionals involved with your child will be able to advise on specific strategies that you can use to help you communicate with your child but here is some general good practice that you can follow when interacting with your child:

- Use simple language to comment on what your child is doing and what they pick up, point to or are interested in.
- Try not to ask unnecessary questions but comment on what your child is doing instead. Therefore instead of saying “who’s that?”, “what colour is the plate?”, “how many cars are there?”, make comments e.g. “it’s a man”, “a green plate”, “1,2, 3 cars”. In this way, when you are interacting with your child, it ensures you are teaching rather than testing.
- Children with Autism may have difficulties understanding spoken language, especially long or complicated sentences. You will have a good gauge of what your child can understand but be aware of all the clues we give without thinking about it e.g. if we say “put it in the bin” and point to the bin, your child does not necessarily have to understand your words to know what you said.. If you think your child has not understood something you’ve said, try using a simpler sentence; just give one thing to do at a time; repeat and allow your child time to process what you’ve said. Also, use of gestures or demonstration alongside your spoken language will help your child to understand and process information.



- Model the correct words or pronunciations but accept and praise all attempts at communication, even if they are not correct. So if your child pronounces a word wrongly e.g. says “tar” for ‘car’, you say “yes, it’s a car” and give a clear word model. If your child uses the wrong words or misses out words e.g. “girl buyed shoes”, you say “yes, the girl bought some shoes”. Or if your child uses a gesture accompanied with a noise e.g. says “er, er, er” whilst lifting his arms up to be lifted you might say “lift up” so you give the words they would say if they could.
- Offer choices to try to develop language – at an early stage these could be a choice of two single words e.g. ‘do you want milk or water?’ or later on, to encourage longer phrases, ‘do you want the big red cup or the little blue cup?’
- Try not to demand language from your child, for example by saying “say ...” or “tell Daddy what this is” as this puts pressure on communication.

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**Date submitted: November, 2012**

**Date of renewal: November 2013**