

Communicative Temptations

Parent Handout

What are communicative temptations?

- A strategy used to encourage communication by setting up situations where a **child wants or needs something to communicate**.
- Often used in speech therapy and early intervention to **help children develop requesting, commenting, and other communicative skills**.
- May be called “**sabotage**” or “**creative mistakes**”

Why should you use them?

- Helps children learn to **initiate requests, comments, or interactions without being prompted**.
- By **creating situations** where the child *wants* or *needs* to communicate, they are more likely to make an effort.
- Encourages **vocabulary growth, sentence building, and social communication**.
- Helps children **understand the power of communication** in **everyday interactions**.
- Encourages children to **engage with another person** while communicating.
- Uses real-life scenarios, making communication **meaningful** rather than feeling like a lesson.

How you can use them?

- **Giving a child a closed container** (e.g., a clear jar with a favourite toy inside) so they have to request help.
- **Offering a child only part of what they need** (e.g., giving them a bowl but no spoon) to encourage requesting.
- **Placing a favourite toy out of reach** so they need to request it.
- **Blowing bubbles and stopping unexpectedly** to encourage the child to request “more” or “again.”
- **Giving the wrong item** (e.g., handing them a toy car when they wanted a cookie) to encourage correction or clarification.
- **Engaging in a fun activity and pausing** (e.g., swinging them but stopping mid-swing) to encourage them to initiate continuation.
- **Give small portions** like only one piece of a puzzle or a few crackers at a time, encouraging them to request “more.”
- **Make Silly Mistakes** like putting a shoe on their hand or a hat on your foot and wait for them to react (they may say, “That’s silly!” or “No, hat on head!”).

- **Set up a Surprising Event** like blowing up a balloon and let it go flying around the room instead of tying it. Wait for the child to comment on what happened.
- **Favourite Toy Trick using a** wind up a toy and let it move unexpectedly (e.g., a car rolling off the table) to encourage an excited reaction like "Oh no!" or "Wow!"

Tips!

Follow Your Child's Interests

- Use activities and objects that your **child is already motivated by** (e.g., favourite toys, snacks, games).
- **If they are not interested, they won't be motivated to communicate.**

Wait and Observe

- Give the child time to **process** and **respond**—don't jump in too quickly.
- Use the "**expectant pause**" (look at them with a waiting expression) to encourage them to initiate on their own.

Use a Variety of Communication Modes

- Accept **gestures, eye contact, signs, vocalizations, or words**—meet your child where they are.
- Model the next level (e.g., if they point, say "Oh! You want bubbles!").

Keep It Fun and Natural

- Make it a **playful** interaction, not a test.
- **Avoid too many temptations in a row**—it can become frustrating if you use it too much.

Reinforce All Communication Attempts

- Even if your child doesn't use words, respond to their **effort** (e.g., if they reach for a toy, acknowledge it: "Oh, you want the car!").

Adjust the Challenge Level

- If your child gets frustrated, make it easier (e.g., instead of waiting for a full request, **accept an attempt** like "buh" for "bubbles").
- If they're ready for more, gently **expand their communication** by modelling longer phrases.

Be Patient and Consistent

- Some children take time to warm up—keep trying to use these strategies **without pressure**.
- Use communicative temptations **throughout daily routines** for natural learning.