TURNING PAGES, BUILDING FUTURES

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

Creating More Opportunities for Your Child to Communicate

Short on time? There's a one-page Communication Opportunities Planner on page 3

Start Here

This resource shows you how to turn everyday routines into natural opportunities for your child to communicate. Notice the moments that already invite communication, then use the planning sheet to choose a few to try.

The big idea: You don't have to wait for your child to ask.

When everything is opened, chosen, and handed over, there may be little reason to communicate. A sealed yogurt tube, a paused swing, or a choice between two books creates a reason to communicate. **Every form of communication counts:** words, signs, gestures, pictures, AAC, sounds, facial expressions, or actions.

Try This: Ten routines, ten reasons

Snack and meals

Try: Pause before opening the package. Let your child choose their cup or plate color. Provide only a small amount at a time. “Forget” to give them a spoon with their yogurt.

Getting dressed

Try: Offer the choice of two shirts. Hold out the socks and wait. Let your child pick what to put on first. Morning routines are full of small opportunities to communicate.

Play

Try: Create fun routines and pause before the good part. Use fill-ins such as “Ready, set…” and give your child a chance to say “go,” gesture, vocalize, or otherwise show you they're ready.

Books

Try: Let your child choose the book. Pause before turning a page. Stop halfway through a favorite line and let them finish it. Point to pictures and pause. Repetition makes every page an opportunity.

Outside and playground

Try: Pause before opening the gate. Offer choices such as “slide or swings?” or “big push or little push?” Pause during a favorite activity to give your child a chance to communicate “faster,” “stop,” or “again.”

Bath

Try: Offer choices of toys, handing them over only when your child asks for them. Pause before winding up a toy or pouring a cup of water. Bath is contained, warm, and playful - one of the easiest places to start.

Errands

Try: Give choices about music to listen to in the car. Turn the volume down so they can ask for it to be turned up. Wait before lifting your child into a shopping cart. Let your child choose snacks while shopping.

Crafts or activities

Try: Store supplies in clear bins and wait before getting them out or opening them. Hand supplies out one at a time. Ask what color crayon, which sticker, how many pieces, or where to put the glue.

Getting help

Try: Put a favorite thing slightly out of reach, hand over a stubborn package, or "forget" the spoon. Pause and give your child a chance to ask for help in whatever way they can.

Making choices

Try: Offer real choices throughout the day: two books, two games, or two routes to the park. A meaningful choice gives your child a reason to communicate.

What to look for

You don't need to collect formal data to notice whether something is helping. Over a week or two, watch for:

- ☐ More tries to communicate - in any form
- ☐ Your child looking toward you, coming to you, or pausing before reaching
- ☐ Fewer frustrated standoffs at the routines you started with
- ☐ The same exchange showing up in new places - "open" at snack becoming "open" at the door
- ☐ More shared enjoyment - moments your child wants to repeat

You don't need to see all five. One small change is information—and a place to build from.

If it doesn't work...

If the pauses feel flat at first, that is not a verdict on your child - it is information. Try:

- Pause a little longer—your child may need more time to respond.
- Respond to communication attempts—the more they are noticed, the more opportunities you create.
- Focus on things your child loves and change to something different if they aren't responding.
- Try one routine instead of five - one good pause a day beats five rushed ones.
- Make sure the item is visible - "out of sight" really can be "out of mind" for young children.
- Give it time. New patterns take practice.

Remember: *You don't have to plan a lesson. Just pause - and give your child a reason to tell you something.*

Want more practical ideas?

Explore more PAGE resources for communication, learning, participation, independence, and everyday routines. Explore PAGE Resources → Or, if you'd like occasional practical ideas delivered by email, **join the PAGE list at pageaba.com.**

Need help figuring out what to try?

If you've tried a few strategies, made adjustments, and still aren't sure what to change, PAGE can help you find practical ways to build communication, participation, learning, and independence into everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

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The Communication Opportunities Planner

You don't need a plan to start - but a two-minute plan helps the pauses happen when the day gets busy. Print this page, pick your routines, and fill it in with what you know about your child.

Routine	What does my child enjoy?	What might my child communicate?
Snack		
Getting dressed		
Play		
Books		
Outside		
Bath		
Errands		
Your own:		

Write it your way - words, drawings, or a list of your child's favorites. This is a note to yourself, not a worksheet anyone will grade.

Start with one routine. Look for one natural reason to communicate. Give your child time to respond.