

7 Communication Skill Development Tips

Communication skills. How can parents encourage them in kids with special needs who are non-verbal? A post at Autisable (www.autisable.com) offers answers for parents asking that question.

Communication Ideas for Parents

The folks at Autisable asked speech experts to share their best tips for parents, and they came up with these seven suggestions. Although they are made with an eye towards kids with autism, they have value for kids with a variety of special needs.

1. **Encourage play and social interaction.** Try different games to find ones your child enjoys, playful activities that promote social interaction. Sit in front of your child and close to eye level so your child to see and hear you.
2. **Imitate your child.** Mimicking your child encourages vocalization and interaction. Also imitate how your child is playing, but only if the behavior is positive!
3. **Focus on nonverbal communication.** Gestures and eye contact build a foundation for language. So use your body and your hands when talking, and exaggerate your gestures. Also, respond to your child's gestures.
4. **Leave "space" for your child to talk.** When your child doesn't answer immediately, don't fill the silence with talk. Instead wait (teachers call this wait time) for your child to compose thoughts and answer. Respond promptly when she speaks, including to their gestures and body movement.
5. **Simplify your language.** This makes it easier for your child to make it easier for him to understand and to imitate your speech. Try using phrases with one more word than your child uses.
6. **Follow your child's interests.** Narrate what your child is doing using simple language. Talking about what your child enjoys helps her develop vocabulary in that area.
7. **Consider assistive devices and visual supports.** Assistive technologies and visual supports can foster speech development rather than replace it. Look for apps and devices with lots of visual supports.

These suggestions are explained in greater detail in the Autisable post, [Helping Your Nonverbal Child Speak](#). The post also provides links to more resources, so surf on over and see for yourself. (<http://differentdream.com/2013/08/7-communication-skill-development-tips-for-non-verbal-kids>); Posted by Jolene on Aug 26, 2013 in [Chronic Conditions](#),



The contents of this factsheet were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, H328M120025 (PEN), H328M120026 (TEAM), & H328M120027 (PATH). However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Greg Knollman.



PATH Project: 1-800-866-4726



PEN Project: 1-877-762-1435



TEAM Project: 1-877-832-8945