

TOP TIPS



Supporting children with social communication difficulties

PROMPTS

Prompts are all the little things we do to help children in their interaction and behaviour.

Example: Child is supposed to sit down on the chair. Your prompts could be to –

- **say** “Sit down.”
- **point** to the chair.
- **physically redirect** your child to the chair.

Use as little as possible, but as much as necessary so that your child is successful, but does not become dependent.

Before repeating an instruction WAIT for your child’s respond and always keep instructions simple!



REINFORCEMENT

We all respond to praise, but for children with social communication difficulties, hearing “Well done!” may not be as rewarding.

- Give **physical** reinforcement. This could be a favourite toy, favourite food, tickles, blowing raspberries – anything that is extremely rewarding for your child.
- Always give reinforcement **immediately** after your child has done something really well.
- Pair this with praising your child **verbally**, and your child will soon learn to appreciate “Good job!” much more.
- Don’t forget to praise any **positive behaviour** that your child comes up with on his/her own (e.g. a nice comment, clever question).

SUPPORTING INTERACTION WITH PEERS

For children with social communication difficulties, interaction with adults is often easier than interaction with peers.

- Organise play dates to practise interaction and support them in initiating and responding to their peers’ initiations.

- Use visual prompt cards such as a hand waving hello and show your child these to initiate with their peers. Another great phrase to model is “let’s play ...”
- Let children take turns to be “the sharer” who hands out toys or snacks to the others and can ask the others what they would like.
- Observe your child and if he/she is snatching others’ toys, help him/her to say, “My turn” or, “Can I have a go?”



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DEALING WITH PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOUR

THE AIM SHOULD BE TO PREVENT PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOUR FROM HAPPENING AND TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO REPLACE PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR WITH ACTIONS THAT AREN'T DISRUPTIVE FOR THEIR COMMUNICATION AND LEARNING.

THESE ARE THREE COMMON REASONS AND SOME TIPS TO PREVENT THEM:

THE CHILD WANTS TO ESCAPE CERTAIN PLACES, PEOPLE OR ACTIVITIES

- Give your child something that helps them feel **safe**. For example, this could be a tangle or carrying a favourite action figure.
- Lower demands. Visually **show** your child what is expected. Start small and use his/her favourite objects to reward completion of steps.
- Set up **routines** supported by visual timetables and First/Next boards.
- Help your child to communicate “**finish**” or “**break**” (e.g. a specific gesture) and then accept this decision.

THE CHILD WANTS SOMETHING, BUT DOESN'T HAVE THE MEANS TO COMMUNICATE IT

- **Observe** your child and look out for **clues** as to what it is he/she wants.
- Help your child to request items/activities by **demonstrating** the request, e.g. “I want the ball!”
- When your child requests something, provide the item **immediately** and praise him/her, e.g. “Lovely asking! Here is the ball.”

THE CHILD ISN'T RECEIVING ENOUGH STIMULATION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT/ACTIVITY

- Enrich the environment. Provide lots of **sensory toys and activities** to meet the independent preferences of your child.
- Help your child to **request sensory activities** (e.g. squeeze, swing around, trampoline).
- **Watch for clues** for what kind of sensory input your child might like and need and join them in their play for a short time by copying them.

