



# Encouraging your child's spontaneous communication - Part 2

## To Encourage *Spontaneous Verbal* Communication

For children who are “developmentally ready” to learn first words (i.e. they can communicate non-verbally and use many different sounds), use the following strategy:

1. Make sure your child:
  - a) Is sufficiently motivated to communicate for something.
  - b) Understands they must communicate with you to get what they want.
2. *Wait* for your child to focus their attention on you – give them time!
3. *Show* them how to ask for what they want by slowly and clearly *saying* the appropriate word (e.g. “cookie”; “bubbles”; “tickle”; “swing”).
4. *Wait* for your child to try to communicate with sounds or by saying part of the word.
5. As soon as your child makes a clear **effort** to communicate with their voice, **respond immediately** by giving a small amount (if possible) of what they want (e.g. food, toys, tickles, etc.). Wait **quietly** and **expectantly** for your child to focus their attention on you, then model the word again. Respond quickly to any of your child's attempts to use their voice to communicate.

\*\*To learn more about supporting your child's communication and language development, please see the following handouts:

- **Understanding How Children Learn to Communicate and Talk**
- **Understanding How Adults Influence Children's Communication and Interaction**
- **How to Help Your Child Communicate and Talk**

### Additional Resources

- Koegel, Robert L., Koegel, Lynn K. (2006). Pivotal Response Treatments for Autism: Communication, Social & Academic Development. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing
- MacDonald, J., Stoika, P. (2007). Play to Talk: A Practical Guide to Help Your Late-Talking Child Join the Conversation. Madison, WI: Kiddo Publishing Co.
- National Research Council. (2001). Educating children with autism. Committee on Educational Interventions for Children with Autism. Division of Behavioral Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Prizant, B. M., Wetherby, A. M., Rubin, E., Laurent, A. C., & Rydell, P. J. (2005). The SCERTS Model: A comprehensive educational approach for children with autism spectrum disorders. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Potter, C., Whittaker, C. (2001). Enabling Communication in Children with Autism. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.
- Sussman, F. (1999). More than Words: Helping Parents Promote Communication and Social Skills in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Toronto, ON; The Hanen Centre. (Accompanying DVD also highly recommended). *Available at [www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)*

**Medical Review:**  
Garrett Watanabe, M.D.

**Author:**  
Andrew Shahan, M.A.  
ASD Regional Health Educator

**Last Updated:**  
September 2009