

Family fact sheet: Using responsive interactions to communicate

A responsive interaction is when you notice and respond to what your child says and does. It helps build a strong relationship.

Start by:

- getting down to the same level
- talking in a relaxed way
- following their lead
- encouraging their efforts to communicate

Try these methods to learn how to use responsive interactions:

1. Serve and return
2. LEARN

What is serve and return?

Serve and return works like a tennis rally. You and your child take turns to respond back and forth.

The serve can be verbal or non-verbal, including:

- words or sounds
- touch
- gestures and facial expressions
- eye contact

How to use serve and return?

1. **Notice what interests your child.** *Where are they looking? Are they pointing? Are they making a sound or facial expression?*
2. **Return the serve.** You might smile, nod, give a thumbs up or ask a question.
3. **Give it a name.** Name what your child is doing. It could be an action, feeling, object or person.
4. **Take turns and wait.** Keep going back and forth. Pause and give your child time to respond.
5. **Practise endings and beginnings.** Stop when your child is ready to move on to something else.

Activity: Building a tower

What you need - Blocks of different shapes and sizes.

If you don't have blocks, you can use everyday items like empty cereal boxes or egg cartons.



Notice what interests your child. Are they gesturing for you to add a block? Are they telling you what they're building?



Return the serve. Ask them a question about what they're building. Add a block to the tower. Praise their efforts.



Give it a name. Name and describe what is happening. Use and repeat words like big, small, tall and fall. Try using bigger words like wobble and tumble.



Take turns and wait. Wait for your child to respond and start again by returning the serve.



Practise endings and beginnings. Pay attention to your child's cues and stop playing with the blocks when they lose interest.

What is LEARN?

The LEARN method is an easy way to teach your child new words and how to use them. You can do this at any time with any type of activity.



.....● **Look and listen for new words**
Use new, unfamiliar words like balance.

.....● **Emphasise the word**
Explain what the word means, using words your child will understand.
Example: Balance means not falling over. I am balancing the block on top. I can balance on one foot.

.....● **and then...**

.....● **Repeat the word**
Do activities with your child that relate to the word so you can say the word again and again. *Example: Take turns balancing different objects on your head. Try balancing on one leg.*

.....● **Notice when your child uses the word**
Encourage and praise your child when you hear them using the word. Repeat the word when you give them praise. *Example: Yes, it is balancing! I like how you used the word balancing to tell me what's happening.*