

BEYOND CHOICE MAKING: Other roles in communication

Why is it important?

Requesting objects or actions is often a powerful communicative function for children. These situations occur frequently throughout the day and usually receive immediate response. Once children are able to request from multiple choices you can begin to respond but not comply with the request. However, it is important to still acknowledge the request and to give an explanation for why the request cannot be fulfilled.

Beyond choice making, it is important to teach children that communication can be used for many different reasons (e.g., for social comments, asking questions, expressing opinions). It is also important to teach children that they can use several forms of expression within one activity.

How do I do it?

Many communicative functions can be expressed through the use of symbols. Symbols can be presented to the child visually and/or orally. Symbols may also be used on a simple speech-generating device. The device would speak the message for the child.

Shared Interaction/Turn-Taking:

Children can state that it is their turn to participate in the action (e.g., to taste the food).
"It's my turn now."

Calling Attention:

Children can call attention to self-achievement and share their accomplishments with others.
"Look what I made today!"

Labelling:

Children can share the name of an object with another person.
"It's a cake!"

Protesting:

Children can communicate their dissatisfaction with an object or event.
"Don't want it!"

Social Greetings and Partings:

Children can indicate generic or specific greetings.
"Hi", "Bye", "See you next week."

Initiating Communication with a Question or Comment:

Children can use topic starters to initiate a conversation about a topic that interests them.
"Guess what we made in cooking today?"

Directing Action of Another Person:

Children can direct another person to do something.
"Put the flour in now."

Using Social Comments and Exclamations:

Children can make comments about things.
"Uh oh, the milk spilt!"

Accepting versus Rejecting:

Children can communicate their likes and dislikes.
"That tastes yucky/yummy."

Responding to Questions:

Children can respond to questions such as Where? What? Which? Why? and Who?

Indicating Possession:

Children can indicate that an object belongs to someone.
"That's my cookie."

Using Describing Words:

Children can put together a least two words to describe something.
"The yummy chocolate."

Using Words to Describe Location:

Children can communicate the location of an object in relation to another object.
"The eggs are behind the milk."

Asking Questions:

Children can ask questions to get information.
"What's that?"
"Where's ___?"

Responding to Social Comments:

Children can respond appropriately to common social interaction such as "How are you?" and "What's your name?"

Clarifying Messages When Not Understood:

Children can repeat or re-phrase messages if not understood.
"What I meant was..."

Indicate Past or Future:

Children can indicate a specific day or just the concept of past and future.
"Next week we are going to make Pizza."

Something to try:

Involve your child in preparing a meal. As you are preparing the meal, talk about your preferences in food

"I don't like celery because it tastes yucky!"

"I love chocolate!"

Then ask your child's opinion. Have your child use the general symbols provided or speech generating device(s) to indicate his/her preferences.

"I like/don't like _____,"

"That's yummy/yucky."