

Things to remember when communicating with children

Before you speak

- Make sure you have the child's attention before you speak to them.
- Make sure you are facing the child and are at their level so that they can see facial expressions and gestures.
- Have all necessary visual aids available either on the work surface or ideally attached to a wrist strap or belt.

When you speak

- Say the child's name at the beginning of an instruction or sentence.
- Give only one instruction at a time.
- Keep instructions short; use the minimum number of words.
- Say exactly what you want the child to do (eg. instead of saying "Tidy up", say "Put the wooden bricks in the blue box"), and back this up with pictures if necessary.
- Give the child time to think about what you have asked of them.
- Use positive communication, instead of saying "Don't run", say "Walk".
- Use exaggerated facial expressions and gestures to give the child clues as to your meaning.
- Use visual prompts such as puppets for story telling.
- If you are interrupted whilst giving an instruction, go back to the beginning of your sentence.
- The child's ability to repeat an instruction back to you does not signify understanding.

