

Activities to Promote Communication

Welcome! All of these activities are designed to promote your baby/toddler/child's communication development. Over the years I have used these activities in individual and group therapy sessions. These activities can be easily carried out at home as each activity is nice and short. You can do one, some or all of these activities. You may choose to do them daily or weekly, it's completely up to you! All you need for these activities is a little bit of space and toys/objects that you have in the house.

We are going to focus on eye-contact, naming, action songs, cause and effect and teaching some important songs – “**Hello song**” and “**The Clean-up Song**”. We are also going to focus on some signing this week, you might like to work on one or more of the following signs, **Hello, more, open, dog, cow, sheep, cat, car, pig, snake, tractor, train**. Pick one of the signs that will be most relevant or useful to your child. Go to the Lámh website www.lamh.org and check out some of the online signs.

Let's get started.

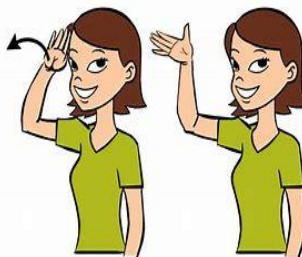
You will need:

- A little bit of space
- A pillow case or any type of bag that will hold a few toys/objects
- Bubbles (if you don't have bubbles you can make up a mixture using one part washing up liquid to 2 parts water – you can make a wand from a pipe-cleaner/plastic straw (you may have some somewhere!) or anything that you can fashion into a wand
- Access to YouTube (not essential, but useful for songs – you may have CDs to hand with many of these songs already or you can just sing the tune yourself!)

Activity 1: Greetings.

I like to start activities singing the **Hello Song**. You will find this song on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x23rTDI4AMs>. This song is great as there is so much repetition of the word Hello – Repetition really helps children to learn vocabulary. Make sure that you are at your child's eye level, use your sign for HELLO throughout the song.

Hello, Hello, how are you?
Hello, Hello, how are you?
Hello, Hello, how are you?
How are you today?



Activity 2: Eye-Contact.

Eye-contact is such an important part of communication. Looking at faces helps babies and young children learn about how sounds are made. This is a super activity to promote eye contact. You want to create a sense of anticipation also. **Open** those bubbles and blow some up into the air – avoid blowing them at faces! Watch as the bubbles **float down and pop!** **Wait** and when your child makes eye-contact, blow some more bubbles.

If your child is not interested in making eye-contact, don't worry, you can keep trying this activity over the next few weeks. This is just an introduction – so be patient and positive and reward any attempts. You could use the phrase **“Good Looking”** to positively reinforce such amazing eye-contact.

When your child begins to become disinterested use your sign or words to indicate that the activity is **“finished”** or **“all gone”**. Show that the activity is over by physically putting the object away into a bag/box.

Activity 3: Looking and Naming Objects

Developing an understanding or the ability to name an object is essential to language development. Your child may be learning what objects are or they maybe attempting to name them. Just follow your child's lead. Place the following items in the bag, **dog, cow, sheep, cat, car, pig, snake, tractor, and train**. These are just suggestions, put other objects or toys that may be of interest or more relevant to your child into the bag (I use a pillow case with a colourful design, they are also easy to wash).



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Place the toy bag between you and your child. Model the activity for your child, pick out the object, your child may spontaneously start to or they may need hand over hand assistance.

When an item is taken out of the bag, name it, sign it and then make the corresponding sound. Talk about the object. Play with it, follow your child's lead and move onto the next item when

Continue until you have taken all items out of the bag or when your child shows that they are finished with the task/activity.

When you have finished this activity, pick up each item and put them back into the bag. You can say and sign the word **“finished”**. You can name the items as you place them back into the bag or you can get your child to help you with this task.

Activity 4: Action Songs

Singing action songs is a great way to learn language. Action songs are full of movement and are a great way to encourage signing, shared attention, memory skills and following instructions. Today we are going to sing **“Row, Row, Row Your boat”**. Sit with your legs facing forward. Place your child in between your two legs, facing you, and hold hands. As you sing the song, pull them towards you and back.

Sing the song through once and then sing it again, this time pausing before the last word in each verse. Take a dramatic pause before the last word in the second verse and wait for your child to provide the scream – this is so much fun!!!!



Activity 5: Cause and Effect

This is activity is a favourite of mine – it never ceases to amaze me how much children enjoy destruction!!!



Cause and Effect is an important stage in a child’s development of play and learning. This kind of play helps the child to learn that their actions can have an effect on something else and encourages the beginnings of problem solving. This is a very exciting game and you may be asked to repeat over and over again. Stack each block or cup and say or sign **“Wait”**, you are building up anticipation. When you have finished stacking let your child push the tower over. I usually say **“all fall down”** or **“uh-oh”**.

Wait for your child to make eye contact with you or sign, make a sound or say a word before starting another build. You could also sign **“more”** or **“again”** to check whether more construction is required.

Activity 6: Clean up Song

This song demonstrates that the activity is over. It also encourages the child to participate in a shared activity. You can sing the “Clean up Song” together which you will find on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oY-H2WGThc8>.

As you are picking items up you can name them/sign and say the word. When you have placed all of the objects into the bag you can indicate that the activity is over by signing & saying the word **“Finished”** or **“all gone”**. Make sure to give positive praise during all tasks: **“Good Job!”** or **“You really helped Mummy/Daddy/me pick things up!”**.

If you would like any advice, support or some more activities please contact me:
olive@downsyndrome.ie