

CONVERSATIONS AT HOME BRING JOY AND CONNECTION

Talking and listening are important parts of communication. Like any other skill, children learn communications skills through models and practice.



MODEL AND COACH GOOD CONVERSATION BEHAVIORS

- Start with a greeting.
- Use different language behaviors to keep conversation going. Kerry Mehaffey-Mataya (2010) wrote about the 3 basic components of conversations: asking questions, telling stories, and making comments.

ASKING QUESTIONS

- Ask questions about shared interests.
- Remember to use “W” words like who, what, when, and why (also, how).
- Ask questions related to the topic.
- Ask questions to know more about your conversation partner.

TELLING STORIES

- Stories should have beginning and endings.
- Think of the main idea or theme of your story to keep you on track.
- Give background information (characters, setting) and provide interesting but relevant details.

MAKING COMMENTS

- Use different and appropriate comments.
- Think of whether your comments match your tone of voice or facial expressions. Your nonverbal behaviors will reflect your sincerity.
- Brainstorm with your child on the words and phrases he can use when he makes comments.

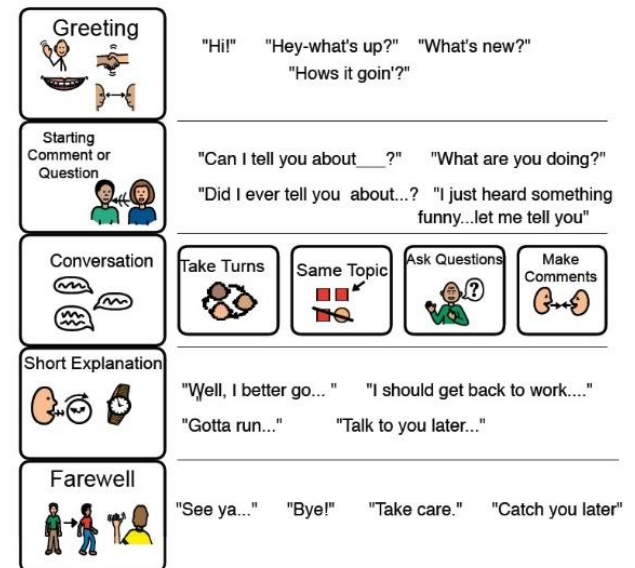
- Remember to take turns. Try not to interrogate when asking questions. You can practice turn-taking by passing a ball back and forth. Whomever has the ball can ask a question, answer a question or make a comment on the same topic.
- Show that you are listening with interest. Face the person you are talking or listening to. Nodding or making a comment helps maintain the flow of a conversation.
- Mark a transition out of the conversation. Say something like “I enjoyed talking to you”. End the conversation on a positive note before saying goodbye.

Does your child need a visual support?

Try using this Conversation Map made by a [Jill Kuzma, speech-language pathologist](#).

Source: <https://jillkuzma.wordpress.com/>

CONVERSATION MAP



Created by: Jill Kuzma



THINK OUT LOUD WHEN YOU MODEL PHONE AND VIDEO CALLS.

Below are suggested scripts to help guide students when they talk on the phone. For children who have never used a phone, you can practice making phone calls on your old cell phones! 😊

Making a Video/Phone Call	
Select the app to use.	
Select who to call. Wait for them to answer.	
Start with a greeting and ask if it's a good time to chat.	
You can tell them why you called: <i>"I wanted to catch up with you. How are you doing?"</i> <i>"What shows have you watched, or games have you played?"</i> <i>"What books are you reading?"</i> <i>"Have you talked to our teacher?"</i> <i>"I wanted to tell you something".</i> <i>"I have a story to tell you."</i>	
Offer a simple explanation or comment before ending the call. <i>"It was nice talking to you."</i> <i>"I have to go."</i> <i>"I'll catch up with you next time."</i> Bye.	

Answering a Video/Phone Call	
Let your parents know who is calling and let them know you are answering the call. If you are using a video conference, make sure you use a safe comfortable space. (i.e. not in the bathroom, on the bed). Sitting upright at a desk or table is ideal.	
Say "hello". Be ready to be asked about how you're doing. You can say one to two sentences about your day. If you have nothing much to say, you can say "Nothing much. I'm just hanging out with family." Or "I'm doing okay, mostly staying inside." You can talk about something the caller might find interesting (i.e. a book you read, a show, something your pet did).	
Like face to face conversations, take turns and make comments or agreeing sounds or head nods to show you are listening. If you're in a conference call, eye contact is also helpful. Find out where the camera is so you can practice looking into the camera and showing that you are listening.	
Offer a simple explanation or comment before ending the call. <i>"It was nice talking to you."</i> <i>"I have to go. Thanks for calling."</i> <i>"I'll catch up with you next time."</i> "Bye."	

REPAIRING COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS

Communication breakdowns happen when your message is not understood or you have a hard time understanding what was said.

When you don't understand what was said:

- Ask that the message be repeated. Check if you heard it right (“I’m not sure I heard you right, Did you say...?”).
- Ask the meaning of specific words.
- Ask for more information.

When your communication partner doesn't understand what you are saying:

- Repeat your message slowly.
- Find a different way to say it. Paraphrase.
- You can type or spell the word you are saying.

THINK ABOUT YOUR COMMUNICATION PARTNER.

Sometimes, we use all the conversation basics but still lose our listener’s interest. When we are in a conversation, we think of our conversation partners and how topics must be engaging for both people. The flow of the conversation or story also determines if the exchange will be successful or enjoyable.

Have conversations at home. Let your conversations bring joy and connection. 😊

References:

Mehaffey-Mataya, Kerry. (2010) . Conversation Basics. Simplifying how we teach Conversation. Retrieved from https://www.mercyone.org/northiowa/assets/documents/autism_conversation-basics.pdf on April 15, 2020

The Social Express (2014). Teaching Your Child How to Start Conversations: 3 Brilliant Basics Retrieved from <http://thesocialexpress.com/teaching-child-start-conversations-3-brilliant-basics/> on April 15, 2020

Additional References:

Communication Skills for Your Family

<https://www.udel.edu/canr/cooperative-extension/fact-sheets/comunications-skills-your-family/>

A good informative article on how families can understand what conversations entail and how to promote communication at home.

Caring for Your Child Ways to Help Your Child Communicate and Request

<https://media.chop.edu/data/files/pdfs/pfe/pfe-ways-to-help-your-child-communicate.pdf>

Good resources for encouraging more language interactions and learning opportunities for young and beginner communicators.