Supporting Children with Social and Communication Differences

Top Tips for Supporting Your Child at Home

Support Children’s Understanding of Routines

Kerry Collier

Early Years Inclusion and Intervention Team
Helping Your Child Understand Routines

Songs
Visual References
Using Objects
Photographs
Symbols
APPS
Drawing
Developing Understanding of the Routine

Depending on your child’s understanding and preferences you can start each day with a visual or musical reference to show what is happening. This will help reassure your child and develop a familiar routine.

Methods to Support Children’s Understanding of Routines

Songs of Reference

Make up simple rhymes, clap your hands to sing familiar transitions in the day if your child likes music and songs.

Sing good morning/good afternoon

Sing the day of the week

Sing a song for washing your hands, a child friendly version is available online “Baby Shark “https://youtu.be/ATcQO527FF4 features a washing hands songs from 20 seconds to whole songs including safe sneezing!

Make a simple song using key words and using gesture for the activity.

“It’s time to brush our teeth, it’s time to brush our teeth, hey ho hey ho, it’s time to brush our teeth!” Model the activity and sing to show what is expected.

Add big gesture to your songs, such as rubbing your tummy or using Makaton signs, these are available on YouTube and videos on the internet.

Don’t worry if you don’t know a sign, using big gesture adds animation to your voice and will help get your child’s attention so they can see what you are saying. For example lifting your cupped hand to your mouth and saying Drink.

Sing Songs to Accompany Play Activities

“This is the way we roll the car, roll the car, and roll the car”

“Bubble, bubble, bubble pop!”

IF you are stuck for inspiration go to YouTube for Songs for Teaching.

Make them simple and repetitive and use each time you do that activity.
Musical Instruments

You can use a tambourine, drum, shaker or bells to tap to gain attention and signify a routine coming to an end or to accompany your songs.

An example of a tidy up song for home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tidy up Song</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tune: London Bridge is falling down</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now it’s time to tidy up, tidy up, tidy up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now it’s time to tidy up and put the toys away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILD NAME, can pick it up, pick it up, pick it up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child NAME pick it up and put it in the box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>......YEEAAAHHH 😊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Hungry Hungry, I am hungry, dinner, dinner here I come. Hungry hungry I am starving , pudding , pudding I want some “
Visual References

If your child does not like singing, try using an **object, photo, or picture symbol** to show what you are talking about and to show what is happening.

Make sure you are face-to-face with your child and do go down to their eye-line and hold an object near your face so that they can start to look towards you. Being level will also help you see how your child will communicate back to you, they might reach or look to show interest or turn away to show they are not interested.

Take your time and pause when showing your child an object or picture.

Use your child’s name and say the name of the object as you show it, such as

“Jo, your **cup**, “

“**to drink**” “It’s time for a drink”. You can gesture as you say this to reinforce the meaning of your words.

Children with social and communication differences need time to process your interaction and the visual information with your words all at the same time so waiting and then modelling using the key word will help.
Try counting to 10 between asking as this is around the processing time for your child to start to come away from what they were thinking about and tune into something new.

For children who are very much on their own agenda we want them to become used to people playing or interacting with them and with a consistent use of simple language, objects or visual support and regular opportunities your child will begin to anticipate your presence, predict the routine and then move on to request your presence or an item once familiar.

**Objects of Reference**

You can match key words to the object for personal care routines, mealtimes and play. For example time for drink (cup), time for bath (sponge) to show what is happening now. Time for Bubbles (bubble pot) Time for Puzzle (puzzle piece or puzzle box).

Over time when we use the objects consistently to represent transitions and activities our children develop understanding of what is happening and where they are going. When familiar with the object and meaning, children can then make choices when the objects are available.

Once children are able to consistently understand objects you can move to photos and pictures, your Speech and Language Therapist or EYSEND inclusion practitioner will be able to guide you on steps if you think your child is matching objects to pictures.
Visual Communication and Visual Information

Photos and Symbols

A visual schedule uses pictures and symbols to show what activities will occur and in what order. Having a routine is important to our children with social and communication differences and once established your child will respond positively to having structure. This is because it helps us to make sense and feel safe especially when we can predict events that will be occurring throughout the day/week. This can help to reduce anxiety levels of children with social and communication differences and/or learning disabilities.

When we are anxious it is hard for us to retain information, especially spoken words so having events, activities and routines presented in a simple visual format can also help to relieve this anxiety.

There are various ways to use visual schedules and for children with mild learning difficulties these can be used to map out the activities of a day or even a whole week. For younger children and children who need more support with understanding we can use one picture or photograph of a single activity such as getting dressed.

Symbols are available online from various organisations including

http://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/.
https://www.twinkl.co.uk/
https://www.widgit.com

You may already be using these with your child with support from your nursery or Speech and Language Therapist. If you do not have any and you think this is appropriate for your child please contact us on earlyyearssendteam@Croydon.gov.uk as we have a bank of symbols that we can share with you via email. Here are some home symbols that you can start
Social and Communication Differences

- breakfast
- wash hands
- dry hands
- soap
- tap on
- tap off
Social and Communication Differences

- potty
- nappy
- pants
- toilet roll
- flush
- dress
Social and Communication Differences

- play
- play
- sleep
- wake
- bed
- walk
Social and Communication Differences

juice  juice
juice  water
water  toast
Social and Communication Differences

- ice cream
- ice cream
- ice lolly
- cake
- apple
- pear
Photographs

You can also use your own photographs of objects and activities with your child. It may be useful to have the pictures on Velcro or stuck down with blu-tac so that your child is able to remove it from the schedule once the activity has been completed.

Communication APPS

There are APPS and photos that you can use on your mobiles or IPADS such as

https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/best-autism-apps/

https://www.icommunicatetherapy.com/

There is a wheel of APPS designed by CALL SCOTLAND, but do use with caution if your child has a strong interest in technology or screen time.


Managing Screen Time – Advice from the National Autistic Society

It is good to limit screen time as we want children to engage with play and the world around them in a variety of ways

“There is no good quality evidence that screen time negatively affects educational attainment or behaviour. Nonetheless, children should be encouraged to experience variety. Obsessive behaviours can restrict family life, and cause additional tension. For this reason, technology use should be carefully managed, ideally from the outset. “


Managing Screen Time in a Routine

• Make technology available for particular activities or at set points of your day including access to TV

• Use the battery life as a way to give a time limit, children start to understand that the battery runs out or needs to be re-charged.

• There are online timer/apps that can automatically shut down the device after a period of time.
• IF you are using your phone put a different colour case that shows when it is their turn to use alone and when you want to do activities with them.

• Join in with their play and comment on what they are doing on screen time, if manipulating a sorting game you can use the language to show what they are doing or label objects that you see. You can play my turn, your turn with games.