

Effective adult interactions

What is the role of the adult in moving children's learning on?

Top tips!



OWL: Observe, Wait, Listen

Observe: Sometimes it's hard to know what's on the child's mind. Taking the time to observe their body language — actions, gestures and facial expressions — will help you figure it out. By tuning in to these messages, you can learn a lot about what they're interested in and what they want to tell you.

Wait: Waiting is a powerful tool. It gives you time to observe what the child is interested in. Even more importantly, it gives the child time to start an interaction or respond to what you've said or done. Waiting means stop talking, lean forward and look at the child expectantly. The child may be used to everyone else doing the communicating. Waiting in this way will send the message that you're ready for them to respond to you or, better still, to take the lead. Once the child does one of these things, it's important for you to respond immediately.

If you need to remind yourself to wait, count slowly to 10 — silently, of course. At first, you may not be used to that much silence. The child may not be used to it either. But be patient and don't rush to say something. It may take some time for them to communicate with you. The most important thing to remember about waiting is to give the child enough time to understand that you expect them to give you a message — any message. It doesn't matter whether they send it with sounds, words or gestures. Anything that the child does or says to make their needs or interests known to you is a message.

Listen: Listening means paying close attention to all of the child's words and sounds. Take care not to interrupt them, even if you've already figured out what they're telling you. When you listen to the child's message, you're also letting them know that what they say is important to you. This helps build confidence and self-esteem.

Take some time to then carefully think and consider:

- How can I show them I value what they've said?
- How can I extend their understanding?
- How can I engage in a meaningful conversation which may lead to discovery and new learning?



WOW: Wait, Observe, Wonder

Make sure you wait before interacting, observe and listen to the child, then wonder; how should you respond...
What do you know about the child?
What would be an appropriate next step in learning?
How can you interact without interfering?
How will you move the learning on?
Will you adapt your teaching/ provision based on what you've seen?



Listen and Learn

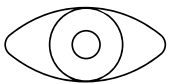
How can you develop the child's language and vocabulary?

Model: Acknowledge what the child says then model it back to them correctly. The child tells you "the kitty flied in the sky", reply, "Oh, your cat flew in the sky?"

Extend: Develop the child's spoken language e.g. add more description, put it in a sentence.

Clarify: Unsure of what they said or what they meant? Clarify this by wondering or asking for clarification. "Oh, that's the rocket that can take you to the moon?"

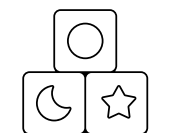
Explain: You give an explanation, e.g. the cockpit is where all the controls are for the aeroplane to fly in the sky.



Eye Level

Get down to the child's level so that you can communicate clearly. Encourage them to face you when talking to you and listening to you, do not force eye contact but model good listening skills and looking at the speaker. Show the child that you're giving them your full attention. It also signals that you're willing and ready to engage with them by actively listening. This is one of the most important ways you can send the message, 'You're important to me'.

If you are unable to give the child your full attention and are already in a conversation, look at them and sign stop or signal 'one moment' by placing one finger in the air.



Play

Let the children lead the play and engage as much as they will let you. Basic play may be imitating them and narrating what you, and they, are doing. Do not overtake the play, follow the child's lead. Offer suggestions as to how the play could be extended, but do not force this.



Communicate and Extend

Narrate what children are doing by expanding their language. This can be done at all levels of language development, from adding voice sounds to small world fire station play, “whoosh!” to teaching new vocabulary to children that are already confident communicators; “You’re right the water has all gone, it is empty. That means there is nothing inside, it’s empty!”



Four to One

Too many questions can be overwhelming for children, imagine being quizzed and asked numerous questions everyday testing your knowledge and understanding! Commenting and narrating is an alternative to asking questions, try four comments to one question...

*comment: Child says “my bike” You say; “You like the bike”

*repeat: Child says “big truck” You say; “big truck”

*expand: Child says “green apples” You say; “Yum, juicy green apples”

*explain: “she is happy” You say; “Yes, she is happy because she is playing with her friends”



Opportunities for Early Reading, Writing, Maths

*share stories in provision, use the books that are in the areas to extend the learning and foster a love for books

*sing nursery rhymes and songs, sing current rhymes that are being taught or link the rhyme to what the child is doing (wind the bobbin’ up when a child is sat threading)

*give children the opportunity to notice, comment on and recognise print, e.g. labels

*provide writing opportunities in all areas. Ensure materials and tools are engaging, motivational and purposeful.

*when communicating with children find opportunities to incorporate counting, singing counting songs, talking about shapes and colours, discussing size and measurement. Do not force this, a child may be telling you all about a dinosaur, it is more purposeful to describe the dinosaur and teach new words than simply asking the child to count the legs!