

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

## Top tips: Communication Matters

**A well-designed environment encourages positive social interactions, reduces potential barriers to communication, and supports the development of essential skills that lay the foundation for learning and social relationships.**

By prioritising positive communication spaces, you can create an environment where every child, regardless of abilities, language or background can thrive. Here are some tips to support you:

- **Remove any barriers** - e.g. ensure the environment is inclusive and reflects the uniqueness of each child – their interests, needs, language, background and heritage to make each child feel valued, seen and heard and therefore comfortable to express themselves
- **Space, light and layout** – ensure it is light enough to clearly see people's faces, that the layout facilitates different kinds of working, e.g. pair work, small group work and that the space matches the kinds of communication you would like, e.g. smaller, cosier spaces are more intimate for 1-2-1 conversations and book sharing
- **Visual aids** - pictures, photographs, charts, posters, visual prompts and objects all enhance vocabulary and language comprehension. Use pictures, photographs and objects that reflect the children's heritage, language and backgrounds
- **Quiet spaces** – establish areas where the noise is low so that children can engage in conversations without distractions. Make sure these spaces are comfortable with cushions and soft furnishings
- **Model the kind of language you want to promote or elicit** - ask open questions to encourage thinking and problem solving. Know your role in supporting communication – narrate children's play, offer choices, extend and expand on what children say



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- **Supply provocations/resources** - that enhance children's curiosity to want to interact and collaborate with others, e.g. interesting objects from nature to engage the senses, loose parts for exploration, an experiment where open questions are asked etc.
- **Plan activities that encourage social interaction** - and the development of social skills, encourage peer interaction and provide opportunities for collaborative play, e.g. role play, puppets
- **Time** – during planned and spontaneous conversations, allow time for children to process what has been said and respond
- **Extend communication friendly spaces** - to the outdoor area, e.g. label plants, use signs and place interactive elements such as magnifying glasses for investigating bugs or food to prepare for a snack. Plan outdoor activities that require discussion and collaboration such as den building, group storytelling circle with props/puppets, outdoor art station
- **Regularly review** – look at how the communication spaces are being used and adjust or modify where/when needed.

### NDNA products to support you with these tips

- [Vocabulary and Early Language Skills](#) – online course
- [Enabling Environments](#) – factsheet

And more resources at [www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna](http://www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna)