

Early Language Development Eye Contact

Eye contact is one of the earliest means of communication. It begins when parent and baby look at each other. Eye contact is used to request, greet, or direct attention. Often children with language difficulties do not look at the speaker. One of our first goals is to help your child develop eye contact.



- To establish eye contact, sit face to face with your child. Attempt to place your child higher than you. Examples of possible positions are:
 - sit your child on your lap,
 - sit in a chair and place your child in a high chair or booster seat,
 - place your child on the couch or chair and sit on the floor in front of him/her. If your child has physical limitations, a Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, or Speech-Language Therapist can give you more ideas.
- To draw your child's attention, hold objects near your face to help guide your child without verbalizing. Often words do not have meaning and for other children, a verbal cue could cause him/her to tune you out.

- Tap your child's nose and then your own nose. After the child looks, even for a brief second, reward him/her and say "Good looking!"
- Put your child's hand on your face to gain attention before giving him/her a direction to follow or a choice.
- Eliminate or reduce auditory and visual distractions, like the television, radio, etc. This helps your child focus on you.
- As your child increases eye contact with you, give him/her the verbal cue, "Look." When your child looks at you, respond.
- Play "funny face" games in the mirror. Your child can establish eye contact with you in the mirror.

by Linda Mawhinney & Mary Scott McTeague

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