

Home Practice Toolkit

Simple ways to build communication into the routines your family is already doing.

The goal is connection, not homework

You do not need a separate therapy block every day. Small communication opportunities during meals, play, books, bath time, errands, and bedtime can add up. Choose one or two strategies that feel natural and practice them consistently.

Four Core Strategies

1. Follow Their Lead

Watch what your child is interested in, join the activity, and talk about what they are already focused on.

- If your child is pushing cars, talk about “car,” “go,” “fast,” “stop,” or “crash.”
- If your child is looking at animals, talk about names, sounds, actions, and where they live.
- Imitate your child's sounds, actions, or play ideas before adding your own.

2. Comment More, Quiz Less

Offer simple comments that give your child language to copy or respond to.

- Instead of “What color is that?” try “You found the blue one!”
- Instead of “What is he doing?” try “He’s jumping!”
- Mix in questions, but let most of your language be comments, models, and reactions.

3. Pause & Wait

A pause creates space for your child to communicate. Wait several seconds and respond to any meaningful attempt — a sound, gesture, word, sign, AAC selection, eye gaze, or action.

- Try it during snack: offer a small portion, pause, and wait for your child to communicate that they want more.
- Model the word or phrase naturally after the attempt.

4. Expand What They Say

Repeat your child's message and add one or two useful words.

- Child: “Dog.” → You: “Big dog!”
- Child: “More.” → You: “More crackers.”
- Child: “Daddy go.” → You: “Daddy is going.”

Everyday Communication Routines

Pick one routine this week and intentionally build in a few extra opportunities for communication.

Mealtime

- Offer choices: "Apple or banana?"
- Model descriptive words: hot/cold, big/little, crunchy/soft.
- Pause before giving a desired item.
- Talk about actions: pour, scoop, cut, eat, drink.

Getting Dressed

- Offer two clothing choices.
- Talk about body parts and clothing words.
- Use predictable phrases: "Socks on!" "Shirt off!"
- Let your child request help before immediately helping.

Bath Time

- Model action words: wash, pour, splash, squeeze, rinse.
- Talk about body parts and sensory words.
- Use songs and repetitive phrases.
- Pause before familiar parts of a routine to invite participation.

Books

- You do not have to read every word on every page.
- Talk about what your child notices.
- Point out actions and emotions.
- Pause and let your child turn pages, point, make sounds, or comment.
- Re-read favorite books — repetition helps children learn.

Play

- Narrate your own actions and your child's actions.
- Create predictable routines such as ready-set-go.
- Use silly moments to encourage interaction.
- Let your child choose what to play whenever possible.

Make Communication Easier

A few small changes can make it easier for children to participate.

Topic	Helpful guidance
Get close	Move into your child's visual and physical space rather than talking from across the room.
Slow down	Use a comfortable pace and short, clear phrases when your child needs extra support.
Give time	Pause after speaking or offering a choice. Avoid answering for your child immediately.
Accept all communication	Respond to gestures, sounds, signs, AAC, words, facial expressions, and other meaningful attempts.
Model, don't demand	Show your child useful language instead of requiring them to repeat every word.
Repeat naturally	Use important words many times across routines and activities.

A 5-minute practice plan

Choose one routine. Pick one strategy. Practice for about five minutes. Notice what your child does. Repeat tomorrow. Consistency is more valuable than making the activity complicated.

Weekly Family Reflection

- What communication did my child use this week?
- What seemed especially motivating?
- Which strategy felt natural for our family?
- What was difficult?
- What is one small thing I want to try next week?

Bloom Pediatric Speech Therapy, Inc. • Parent education resource

Information in this resource is based on current guidance from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Bloom Pediatric Speech Therapy, Inc. is not affiliated with or endorsed by ASHA. This resource is for general education and is not intended to diagnose or treat a speech, language, hearing, or developmental disorder.