

Reading Signals

What?

(List 1-3 targets prioritized by the caregiver such as the examples below)

- Share attention by noticing and looking at people
- Share emotions by looking at you and smiling or looking to you for comfort when hurt or scared
- Share intentions by requesting by using gestures, sounds, body movements

How?

- Watch your child and look for signals for attention, food, and listen for sounds, actions,
- Sit close to the child, face to face, on the same level so
- Choose favorite materials, toys, and objects to engage and motivate
- Join in what the child is doing and share the child's focus of attention
- Look expectantly, wait, and then take a turn with the child

Why?

- Very early, children learn they have power to gain your attention. Little signals such as a look at your face, kicking legs and waving arms, giggles, a soft whimper, or a big cry all let you know the child's interest and emotions. You can learn what the signals mean by responding even if it takes a few tries to get it right! By noticing the child's signal and responding, you are helping them learn how to get your attention and start an interaction. When you respond to your child by sitting at their level, noticing what they are looking at, and following their interests, you are maximizing opportunities for simple yet enjoyable interactions by making it easy for them to read your signals too.

When?

- While playing games, singing songs, reading books- any activity where the child can interact with you
- When child initiates interest in an activity or wants you to notice their interests such as wanting a toy or drink, showing the toy they have
- During caregiving routines when the child is showing an interest in participating
- During comfort routines or when the child is distressed, fearful, unhappy- any time you can support social emotional growth!

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Name It!

What?

(List 1-3 targets prioritized by the caregiver to embed like the examples below)

- Early expressive communication targets such as words, word combinations, gestures, and words
- Literacy targets such as finding pictures in books, naming puzzle pieces, labeling family photos
- Learning vocabulary, following simple directions,
- And actually, practice for any motor or adaptive skill is more fun with words!

How?

- Name objects and actions during play and caregiving such as, “car- go” “push,” “cup,” “sock.” Start with simple and familiar words. Use the family’s words!
- Begin an interaction with a word and/or gesture to gain child’s attention. Say “Up” and hold out your arms to the child, pause and encourage the child to take a turn by lifting arms up.
- Follow the child’s focus and connect their actions with words. When child reaches for the soap, say “soap;” label the water, towel, toothbrush, and other meaningful objects in the routine.
- Name feelings as a response to the child’s signal or cue. Saying “boo-boo” when child cries after falling or “love you” during a hug gives meaning to feelings.
- Talk clearly and simply. Use short phrases and add gestures. Don’t use baby talk.
- Add new information to the label when the child shows understanding, big car, Daddy’s shoe, kitty sleeping or “I see the red ball”)

Why?

- When you name what the child is focusing on, you help the child understand the world around them and what to expect in the routine. Naming gives children words to use and lets them know you are interested in their participation. Talking about what’s happening while it is happening also captures the child’s interest and attention and can motivate them to extend their participation.

When?

- Anytime! Play, chores, community outings. Label items as you put them in the grocery cart!
- During mealtimes, bath time, diapering, or washing hands – anytime when learning words will guide their interaction and build independence.
- Books, toys, pets, clothing items, foods, whatever the family identifies as important are all favorites.

Name It!

What?

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How?

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Encouraging Engagement

What? *(List 1-3 targets prioritized by the caregiver to embed like the examples below)*

- Looks toward caregivers, objects, or sounds to show interest. Establishes joint attention with caregiver.
- Use appropriate means to communicate such as looking, reaching, pointing, or using other gestures, vocalizes, uses words.
- Responds to caregiver's words, gestures, actions, facial expressions with attention and action.

How?

- Gain child's attention by being face to face, at their level, and in proximity. Child should be supported and in stable position.
- Be enthusiastic and warm. Use exaggerated facial expressions, silly voices, singing to gain or maintain attention
- Provide favorite and familiar toys and materials that are interesting to the child. Arrange materials to include interaction with adult, such as putting the object of interest just a little out of reach.
- Follow the child's lead when they are ready to move to a new activity; join in what they do.
- Use predictable routines. Talk about what you are doing while you are doing it (talk in context) using language at their level.

Why?

- Young children (and probably most adults) learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. The first step of a successful interaction occurs when the child and caregiver are attending to each other and/or an object or action. They are tuned into each other and the environment around them. Sometimes children need a little extra encouragement to attend and participate. Identifying the child's interests promotes joint attention; following their lead increases motivation and extends participation. Remember, you are your child's best toy! Your smiles, hugs and high fives provide the social connectedness used to build the child's foundation for physical and mental health, cognitive, social and communication development.

When?

- Anytime, anywhere when child is alert and secure with familiar adult
- During a familiar routine (such as reading a book or singing a song)
- When introducing a new activity or play routine.
- Whenever a child needs help to participate in or complete a game, routine or activity.

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Waiting Expectantly

What? *(List 1-3 targets prioritized by the caregiver to embed like the examples below)*

- Cruises along couch, walks to caregiver waiting 2-3 steps away, climbs stairs to peers
- Use words and gestures to communicate.
- Directs attention towards us by looking, pointing or saying words.
- Fills turn in play, chores, caregiving routines

How?

- Begin in a routine that the child likes and knows, such as snack, or chase, or tickle games. Take a few turns and then stop. Look at the child and signal it's their turn, pause 2-3 seconds until child responds.
- Before asking the child to say or do something, wait silently while looking interested to give the child a chance to participate. You may be preempting the child's practice by doing it for the child without giving adequate time for him to respond.
- If the child doesn't respond, prompt by asking them simple questions like "What do you want?" or commenting encouragingly, "You can do it!" and wait again.
- If the child doesn't respond after your pause, demonstrate the target you wanted him to practice, offer supports, and then complete the interaction to encourage the child to participate in the future.
- Expectant waiting should be used when you are sure the child can complete the target with support. If the target is too difficult, waiting expectantly will not encourage participation.

Why?

- A short pause is a natural way of signaling to the child that it's his turn for a response. When you look expectantly, use facial expressions or encouraging words and gestures, you are signaling your encouragement and expectation that he will participate and practice a target. Encouraging the child to respond by giving him adequate time and encouragement can build confidence and increase motivation to continue. Waiting is a multipurpose strategy; it works with many different targets and routines. However, it should not be overused. Asking a child to wait too long or too often can frustrate the child and impact trust. Expectant waiting can support initiation of interactions by the child. It also promotes the use of natural reinforcers for participation; the child gets your attention or the requested object or action instead of praise like good talking.

When?

- Anytime the child is interested in and can participate in a family activity or familiar routine.
- During a familiar routine (e.g., reading a book, singing a song, feeding the pet) when the child can take a turn to practice a target
- When child needs help to complete a game or activity, encourage him to communicate a request.

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Turn-Taking (aka Serve and Return)

What?

(List 1-3 targets prioritized by the caregiver to embed like the examples below)

- Takes turn in social game, e.g., peek, gotcha, raspberries
- Turns pages in books, grasps and releases toys/objects into container,
- Participates (has a productive role) in games, songs, play with another (e.g caregiver, sibling, peer)
- Initiates and responds to communication, takes turns pointing, waving, naming pictures

How?

- Follow the child's interest during play and encourage back and forth exchanges.
- Use gestures and label your actions as you demonstrate taking a turn. Point at an object, say "my turn," demonstrate action and encourage child to imitate. Use a gentle prompt or cue to get the game started.
- Take a turn and wait. Waiting keeps the interaction going and helps the child know it is his turn.
- Look for ways to take turns with different objects/games. The back-and-forth interaction can be quick or multiple exchanges. Every turn counts!
- Promote initiation by pausing during the interaction and waiting for the child to start the interaction.

Why?

- Children to interact by taking turns with their caregivers. It is their earliest conversations! Taking a turn with you in a game or while eating, getting dressed, or having a snack offers an opportunity to engage with you and gives them a role in the interaction. When you pause, you let them know you are interested in what they can do or say. They gain confidence and independence interacting with others. Taking turns can also help children learn self-control and how to get along with others. They begin to understand the give and take with others.

When?

- When you are playing simple games such as peek-a-boo, chase, rhymes with actions, songs... Almost anything the child enjoys with their caregiver.
- Everyday routines and activities provide multiple opportunities for turn taking; during mealtimes, bath time, diapering, or washing hands.
- Chores are more fun when they are completed together. Picking up toys, putting away laundry, gathering sticks in the yard can be turn taking opportunities.

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Building a Routine

What?

(List 1-3 child targets prioritized by the caregiver to embed)

Examples

- Has productive role or job in the routine, e.g., carries spoons and cups to table for dinner, lifts arms when putting on shirt or jacket
- Participates or takes turns in routine practicing motor, communication, adaptive skills, e.g. stoops, picks up object and carries to basket when picking up toys, rolls or kicks ball to brother when it is his turn
- Follows simple directions, e.g., gets the diaper and wipes to set up diaper routine, turns pages of book, helps set up snack, picks up toys after playtime

How?

- Reflect on the typical sequence of the activity or a predictable sequence that would be comfortable to follow. Identify logical starting and stopping points that can signal to the child when to participate
- Talk about the steps of the routines as you complete it to provide the context and language for the child.
- Identify roles or actions the child can perform as a part of the routine
- Include everyday materials, toys, and objects relevant to the routine
- Repeat sequence consistently and frequently

Why?

- Actions that are predictable and repeated regularly encourage learning over time. Singing the same songs, including the same actions (e.g., Twinkle, twinkle, Peek) or reading the same books increases familiarity and opportunities to practice skills through repetition. Following a similar sequence for caregiving routines such as snack, diaper change, dressing provides structure for the child. Over time, when the sequence is the same, the child can predict what is next, join in and participate with more independence. Routines also promotes security and confidence as the child is engaged in familiar activities with familiar caregivers.

When?

- Play with objects, games, books
- Caregiving such as diaper change, handwashing, dressing
- Chores such as feeding the pet, setting the table, doing laundry, picking up toys

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When?

- Play with objects, games, books
- Outside play, going to the park, taking walks, going to the store
- Caregiving such as diaper change, handwashing, dressing
- Chores such as feeding the pet, setting the table, doing laundry, picking up toys