FREE FAMILY GUIDE

Everyday Communication Guide

Make space for your child to be heard, in the ways that work for them.

Communication is more than speech

Words, gestures, pictures, signing, body movements and communication devices can all carry meaning. Notice what your child is showing you. A spoken word is not more valuable than another clear way to communicate.

Connect without pressure

Join an activity your child enjoys. Comment simply on what is happening instead of asking repeated questions. Pause and give processing time. Do not require eye contact or repeat requests to speak.

Say less, show more

Use short, concrete phrases: "Shoes on" or "Time for a break." Pair words with familiar pictures or actions. When your child is overwhelmed, reduce language and demands before discussing what happened.

Offer real choices

Show two available options, such as a book and a puzzle. Accept pointing, looking, reaching, words or a device response. Include the option to say no or choose later. Avoid testing your child or withholding essential needs to prompt speech.

Keep communication available

Keep your child's existing communication system within reach at all times. Model its use without requiring imitation. Ask a speech and language professional for individual guidance on AAC (augmentative and alternative communication).

General educational guidance, not medical or therapeutic advice. Adapt ideas to your child. Seek qualified support for persistent distress, pain, feeding or sleep concerns. Never force touch, movement or eye contact.

Choices and next steps

Add familiar words, drawings or photos. Use your child's preferred communication system alongside these strips.

First / Then

FIRST: what is happening now	
THEN: what happens next	

Two choices

CHOICE A	
CHOICE B	

Useful messages

Help | Break | No | More | Finished | Something hurts

Model these messages in everyday moments. Respect "no" and breaks wherever possible. First / Then shows the order of events; it is not a condition for accessing food, comfort or communication.

My communication passport

Share with caregivers or school. Include only information you are comfortable sharing.

My name / what I enjoy	
How I communicate yes and no	
How I ask for help or a break	
My pictures, signs or device	
What helps me understand	
What I want adults to know	

Review together as your child's communication develops. Keep any device or picture system available, including during difficult moments.