

Interaction technique prompt card 1

Tune in: Watch, wait, wonder

Do:

- Observe the child. Don't interact.
- Look at their hands – what are they doing?
- Look at their eyes – what are they looking at?
- Ask yourself: What would my interaction add right now?
- Think before you speak.
- **Remember:** Sometimes, it is best to leave the child alone.

Why?

When we take time to work out what the child is focusing on before jumping in, we are more likely to know:

- if we are needed
- what we can build on.

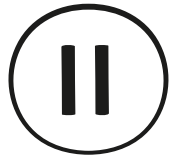
Research tells us that interactions that build on the child's interests help to boost language.

Example:

Zahir is threading beads on to a pipe cleaner. His tongue is sticking out slightly in concentration, and his eyes are totally focused on the task at hand.

His key worker 'tunes in' to Zahir and decides that any interaction right now would interrupt Zahir's learning.

When Zahir has finished the threading, his key worker knows that an interaction will add something and so praises Zahir for his focus.



Interaction technique prompt card 2

Pause more: Think before you speak

Do:

- Before you interact, pause to give the child the chance to initiate the conversation.
- As you interact, pause after what you have said.
- Wait up to 10 seconds.
- Show you are listening through warm eye contact.

Why?

By pausing, you:

- allow the child time to process what you have said
- give them the chance to lead the conversation
- stop yourself from dominating the conversation
- give yourself time to think of the best thing to say.

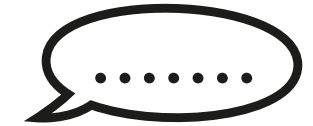
Example:

Max shows his key worker a picture he has painted, and his key worker asks him to say what it is.

Max is silent. He looks at his painting, then at his key worker, then back at his painting.

His key worker remains silent but follows Max's gaze and smiles when he makes eye contact. After about 10 seconds, Max says that it is a picture of his family.

With time and non-verbal encouragement, Max was able to express himself.



Interaction technique prompt card 3

Running commentary: Narrate the activity

Do:

- Narrate what the child is doing.
- Use rich and extended language.
- Be encouraging and enthusiastic!

Say:

- *I can see you are ...*
- *Now you are ...*
- *Look at you ...*

Why?

By providing a running commentary, you:

- provide the child with the language they need in that moment to make sense of what they are doing
- extend their language and thinking by offering a high-quality model of vocabulary and grammar
- reduce pressure on the child to talk.

Example:

Freya is making a junk model in the creative area. Her key worker provides a running commentary.

Look what you've done! You have stuck those two boxes together with a big piece of tape. That looks really strong ... Ooh, now you are using the glue to stick on the card. Good idea! That looks very strong ... Wow, now you are carefully cutting out more blue card ...



Interaction technique prompt card 4

Make links: Connect to what they know

Do:

- Link what the child is doing at that moment to what they have done previously at school or at home.
- Links can be made to something the child has done or seen, or a poem or rhyme, or a book!

Say:

- *That is like when ...*
- *That makes me think of ...*
- *Do you remember when we ... ?*

Why?

When we link what the child is doing in the moment to something else in their experience, we are:

- increasing their knowledge of the world by building on what they already know
- helping them develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary by relating words to different contexts.

Example:

Abdulrahman is making cakes with the playdough, sticking candles in and pretending to blow them out. His key worker knows that it was Abdulrahman's birthday recently.

Key worker: You had a cake for your birthday, didn't you?

Abdulrahman: Yes. My birthday.

Key worker: Your cake was chocolate, wasn't it?

Abdulrahman: Yes. Chocolate cake!

Key worker: Do you remember we read that book about the little girl who liked chocolate cake?

Abdulrahman: Yes!

The key worker gets the book and finds a page with a picture of the cake, then points to the playdough cake.

Key worker: Look! This looks just like the cake you are making.



Interaction technique prompt card 5

Give choices: Model language

Do:

- Change a closed question (e.g. *Would you like to play with the cars?*) into a choice (e.g. *Would you like to play with the lorry or the police car?*).
- Adapt your language according to the child (e.g. *Would you like the slow lorry or the speedy police car?*).
- Encourage the child to repeat their choice back to you.

Say:

- *Would you like ... or ... ?*
- *Do you want to ... or ... ?*

Why?

By giving a choice, you:

- expose the child to more language than they would hear in a closed question
- make using language easier by providing a clear model for them to copy
- develop vocabulary at the right level for them.

Example:

During snack time, the nursery teacher is sitting with a group of children. Using their knowledge of the children's language, the teacher asks three different questions.

Would you like a banana or a carrot?

Would you like a yellow banana or an orange carrot?

Would you like a big, bendy banana or a clean, crunchy carrot?



Interaction technique prompt card 6

Recast and extend: Build on language

Do:

- Repeat what the child has said, but add one or two words or a short phrase (depending on the child's level).
- Stress the word(s) you add.
- If the child makes an error, gently recast the correct version.
- Add different types of words, e.g. adjectives and nouns.
- Don't make it sound like you're correcting.
- Always start with an affirmation, e.g. 'Yes, ... ' or 'That's right, ... '

Why?

By building on what the child says, we:

- validate what they say
- provide a language model that develops their vocabulary and/or grammar at just the right level of challenge
- provide language that is relevant and meaningful to the child.

Example:

Victoria: Mummy work.

Key worker: That's right, mummy **is at** work. **She will be back soon.**

Leon: Look! Bus!

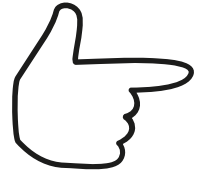
Key worker: Oh, yes. A **big, red** bus!

Kian: I went to the park.

Key worker: Yes, you went to the park **and it was raining.**

Priya: Look! I made-d a boat!

Key worker: Oh yes! You **made** a boat **out of boxes.**



Interaction technique prompt card 7

Name: Point and label

Do:

- Use this prompt with real objects, actions or pictures (photographs or illustrations from a book).
- Point to the object, action or image that you are referring to.
- Tell the child what it is.
- Provide a brief, simple explanation, if needed.
- Ask the child to repeat the word, if appropriate.
- Make opportunities to reuse the word and emphasise it when you do.

Say:

- *That is .../Those are ...*

Why?

By naming objects and actions that the child can see and experience directly, we:

- provide the language that they need in the moment
- extend their vocabulary
- build their knowledge of the world around them.

Example:

Amira is working in a small group to make fairy cakes. Her key worker breaks an egg into the bowl.

Key worker: Look Amira, I am cracking the eggshell.

Amira: Cracking the egg.

Key worker: That's right, cracking the eggshell. Now, this is called a whisk. Here, can you hold the whisk? Can you say 'whisk'?

Amira: Whisk. It's heavy!

Key worker: The whisk is quite heavy, isn't it? It's made of metal. You use it to stir air into the mixture. You try!



Interaction technique prompt card 8

Ask open questions: Find out more

Do:

- Show genuine interest by getting down to the child's level, giving them your full attention and smiling.
- Be curious – ask genuine questions: *What would you like to find out more about?*
- Use any of the question starters below.
- Remember! Give the child ample time to respond.

Say:

- *Tell me (more) about ...*
- *How/Why/What/Where/Who/When ... ?*

Why?

By asking open questions, we:

- provide the child with a meaningful reason to use language
- extend their thinking rather than test what they already know
- build up the natural back and forth of a conversation.

Example:

Kwasi is playing in the mud kitchen, stirring a mixture of mud and leaves.

Key worker: Ooh, that looks interesting! What are you making?

Kwasi: It's a potion.

Key worker: A potion! How did you make it?

Kwasi: I got leaves and stones and mud and water.

Key worker: You mixed leaves, stones, mud and water. What are the leaves for?

Kwasi: They are magic leaves!

Key worker: Ah, I see! Tell me more about what the magic leaves do ...



Interaction technique prompt card 9

Prompt thinking: Think, suggest, wonder

Do:

When interacting with the child, extend their thinking in one of the following ways:

- say out loud what you think about what the child is doing
- make a suggestion for something the child could try
- suggest a possible or imagined scenario for them to think about.

Remember to keep your tone positive, playful and genuine.

Say:

- *I think that .../I don't think that ...*
- *Why don't you .../Have you tried ... ?*
- *I wonder what .../Imagine if ...*

Why?

You provide a scaffold for the child's learning by prompting them to think in a way they might not be able to do on their own:

- use 'I wonder' questions or make suggestions; do in a gentle way to build confidence
- think aloud to provide a model for them to imitate.

Example:

Kayo is in the sandpit making sandcastles with different sized buckets. After building lots of castles and knocking them down, he tells his key worker that he wants to build a tall castle.

Key worker: I wonder what will happen if you put one castle on top of the other?

Kayo thinks for a while and then tries it. It collapses.

Key worker: Why don't you try putting the smaller castle on top this time?

When the castle collapses again, Kayo is disappointed.

Kayo: It fall down.

Key worker: Oh no, it fell down! I think you need to put the bucket on top really carefully. Shall we try together?



Interaction technique prompt card 10

Comment: Tell, don't ask

Do:

- Watch what the child is doing.
- Make a comment about what they are doing. Don't be tempted to ask a question.
- Include any key words in your comment that you want the child to learn.

Say:

- *I can see ...*
- *You are/you have ...*

Why?

By replacing questions with comments, we:

- reduce the pressure on the child to speak; this is helpful for less confident or reluctant speakers
- provide a model of good language for the child to imitate
- repeat key vocabulary to reinforce prior learning.

Example:

Rhian and Blake are playing outside with the chalks on the playground floor. Their key worker approaches them.

Key worker: Ah! You're drawing lots of long lines with the chalk.

Blake: Yeah, we're drawing snakes!

Key worker: Oh, wow! Yes, I can see that now. Rhian, your snake is so long it goes all the way to the gate!

Rhian: My snake goes to the gate!