

Toddler Talk

Parent Handout

Technique 2 - IMITATING

Today's goal is to establish the habit of IMITATING your child's actions, sounds, words, and phrases. IMITATING shows your child that you are interested in what he or she does and says. In addition, IMITATING helps to increase your child's attention span. Children learn to communicate by watching and doing what others do. But, before imitating you, the child should see you engaged in IMITATING on a regular basis. IMITATING should occur during TURN-TAKING sequences.



Strategies for Use of IMITATING

1. **Match actions.** Watch your child and DO exactly what you see.

Examples:

- A. Child lies on the floor and you do the same. Be sure to look at your child.
- B. Child puts a toy figure in a bus and you do the same.
- C. Child winds a jack-in-the-box one turn and you do the same. Each complete crank of the handle equals a person's turn. Don't let your child keep turning the handle or you won't get your turn!

2. **Match sounds and words.** Listen to your child and repeat what was said.

Examples:

- A. Child says "whee" and parent says "whee." Remember to imitate any action produced by your child when you take your turn.

B. Child says "buh" and pushes the bus. You say "bus" and push the bus.

C. Child says "pa bubba" and you say "pop bubble" as you perform the action.

3. **Use animation.** Use smiles, gestures, exaggerated facial expressions, and "wide eyes" to keep the play and conversation going. Show that you expect a response from your child by being animated during your turn. Don't be afraid to "let go," be silly, and have fun!

Don't forget to do the following:

- Be face-to-face with your child.
- Be excited and show enthusiasm.
- Get into the "imitation habit."

■ **Suggested Home Activities**

Set aside two periods each day to PLAY with your child and use the technique of IMITATING. Each period should be at least 10 minutes in length. Think about this practice time as **Toddler Talk Time** and create an environment that is free from distractions and that allows you to focus on becoming proficient in using IMITATING. The more time you set aside for practice, the better you will become at using this technique to help your child communicate.

As time progresses and you become more comfortable using IMITATING, you may want to begin to use this technique in other situations besides play. Here are some ideas:

1. During bath time, wait for your child to engage in an activity such as pushing a boat, pouring water, or manipulating a toy. MATCH the child's action and words while taking turns. Try to keep the play going for at least six turns.
2. While playing on the playground or at the park, watch what your child does and imitate these actions. If the child dumps sand out of a bucket, you do the same.

REMEMBER

Now you are practicing both TURN-TAKING and IMITATING while playing with your child. Be sure to practice both techniques daily!