

Reduce the pressure – fewer questions & more comments

Why shouldn't I ask questions?

- Children know that questions demand an answer. This puts them under pressure to speak even if they know the answer
- If your child only hears questions such as “what’s this?” “What are you doing?” then they are not hearing any names, actions words or descriptions.
- A lot of questions stop or limit a conversation. Most questions require one-word answers.

But is commenting okay?

- Making comments takes away the pressure for your child to speak
- With comments your child is hearing words being repeated and new words added which is how children learn
- Making comments often leads to your child saying much more.

How do I turn my questions in comments?

This is difficult at first because we are all in the habit of asking children question. Try answering the question yourself.

For example, if you see a dog across the road, instead of saying: “*What’s that there?*”, you could say: “*Look it’s a dog.*”

Can I ever ask questions?

- Yes, you can. You can ask questions if you don’t know the answer. For example: “What did you have for lunch today?”
- Only ask questions that you think are necessary and try not to force your child to speak
- If you know the answer you are just testing your child and putting unnecessary pressure to answer
- If your child is older, they will be able to answer ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions which can take the conversation further and can increase their learning
- If you find you’re asking lots of questions don’t worry, just give your child a moment to answer. If they don’t, then answer for them to model the correct answer.

For example:

Your child is playing with playdough and you want to join them to encourage their communication & language...

'What have you got there?'

'What colour is it?'

'What are you going to do with it?'

'Oh playdough! It's red

playdough...'

'You're rolling the red playdough...'

'Oh look, you've made a circle shape with the red playdough'

Can you see the difference in the language that the child hears and therefore has a chance to learn and make the connections to what they are doing while playing?

They are hearing the main words repeated to help with this.

Remember...try not to fill all the silences. When you make a comment, watch and listen to your child to see what they do or say.

Remember for every question you ask, try to balance it with at least 4 comments.

For example:

'You've got the baby'

'She's crying'

'Rock the baby'

'I think she's hungry'

'What would you like to give the baby to eat?'