

## Ideas for parents - SEND in the Early Years

### *Intensive Interaction*

Intensive Interaction (<https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>) is a way of developing and teaching the most fundamental communication abilities – ‘The Fundamentals of Communication’ – such as understanding and using eye contact, facial expressions, and sounds/speech. It is based on enjoying being with each other and starting to understand how interactions/conversations work in a back and forth way.

Let your child take the lead, try to tune into them, notice what they seem to be interested in and what they might be thinking. Try not to make any demands of them.

Respond to them as if you’re having a conversation, with or without words – if they make a sound, ‘answer’ them and wait for them to make another sound, and so on.

Don’t worry if nothing seems to be happening, just enjoy being with them and noticing them feeling the same.

### *Other activities:*

1. Set up a box of sensory and calming objects for them to explore, and that can help when they’re finding things hard. You could include:
  - pieces of material with different textures (e.g. a face flannel, a fabric sample, etc.)
  - sponges
  - brush
  - comb
  - shells
  - pine cones
2. Make up a bucket or box of exciting objects – a balloon pump with a balloon that you can let go, a spinning or light-up toy, a clockwork

toy, etc. Sit in front of your child/ren with your bucket and make up a song, e.g. I've got something in my bucket, in my bucket, in my bucket. I've got something in my bucket, I wonder what it is!' Open the bucket, take out an object and demonstrate it, put it back and take out another, and so on. The idea is that the children watch the performance rather than using the activities themselves.

3. Play 'ready, steady, go' games, such as rolling a car down a ramp or blowing bubbles. Build up the anticipation by saying 'ready..... steady.....' slowly, and waiting for your child to look at you before saying 'go!'
4. Lemonade volcano – you will need a chilled bottle of lemonade, salt, glitter, food colouring, and an old shower curtain or tray to protect the surface/floor. Cover the floor with the shower curtain or tray, open the bottle slowly to create anticipation. Add a drop of food colouring, then some glitter (this creates a layer so the salt doesn't hit the lemonade straightaway). Add the salt – and Whooooosh! It erupts!
5. Have an area in the house where your child can go to have time to relax or to calm down if they need to.
6. Build a den, full of cushions, pillows, blankets, etc.
7. If your child loves routines and finds change difficult, set up a visual timetable (take photographs so your child can easily identify things in your own home, or search online for 'free visual timetable pictures'). They may just need to see what order things are going to happen in.
8. Invite your child to help with jobs around the house, which can give them a sense of achievement – preparing a simple meal or snack together, baking, wiping or setting the table, etc., helping in the garden to water, plant and weed.
9. To help develop physical motor skills with some familiar household items and resources:

- Make holes in pieces of cardboard from boxes so your child can practice their threading skills with string or ribbons.
- Make playdough at home:  
<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/playdough-recipe>
- Use chunky chalks (or some small stones will make marks on paving) outdoors on the ground to make marks or draw.

10. Maintaining a healthy diet and routine with snacks and meals can be very important for children with additional needs. It may be useful to stick to meal times that would have previously been in place when at preschool, to help keep them in a regular cycle throughout the day.

*If your child struggles with certain foods, the information here could be helpful: <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/249099/fussy-eaters-information-sheet.pdf>*