

Making Choices

Why is this important?

As adults, we make choices throughout the day: what we want to wear, if we want tea or coffee, where we want to go. Children need to learn how to make a choice so that they can tell us what they want, become more independent and less frustrated. Giving a choice also allows your child to listen to new words and begin to learn what they mean.

How can I do this?

Children can sometimes find making a choice difficult and this leaflet contains steps to work towards being able to make an independent choice. The easiest way to do this is to start with an easy choice (imagine being asked if you want chocolate or fish on your ice cream!) and gradually make it more difficult.

Before you start

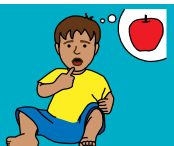
- It is important that you know what your child likes and does not like (which can change all the time!)
- Remember that communication is not just about 'talking'. It may be signing, an attempt at a word, a noise, a gesture, or any other attempt to get your attention. All of these are ways that your child can tell you what they want.
- Give your child time to think about the choice and answer you. This might take a while, but try to give this time when you can.

Choice with toys/items

1. Choice of two toys: one should be a toy your child really enjoys playing with and one should be a toy your child isn't interested in.
2. Hold out the toys one in each hand and name them for example "ball or sock?" Move the object slightly as you name them to allow your child to understand which one you are talking about.
3. Wait for a response from your child before giving them the toy they want. A response may be your child looking, reaching out, making a sound or a change in body movement.
4. No matter how your child chooses, acknowledge this by giving them the item they have shown interest in straight away, and repeat the word for them to hear e.g. "ball!"
5. Make sure the favourite toy is not always in the same hand. This allows your child to look at both choices equally.



"Ball or sock?"



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Choice with food

Please follow the same steps as above for choices with food:

- Making choices with food should be away from meal times. Snack time could be a good time to do this
- Break up food into smaller pieces so that you can practise offering a choice more times.
- Offer choices in a bowl – you could also offer a choice of colour bowl



“Chocolate or apple?”



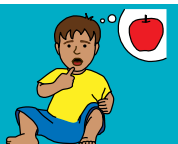
When your child is able to make a choice between something they like and something they don't like, try to make the choice more difficult:

Making a choice with two items your child likes

1. Hold out the two choices and name them - “cars or bubbles?”. Give your child time to make a choice and watch carefully for their response. As soon as they have made a choice, give them the item they have requested.
2. What to do if too difficult - it might take time for your child to understand as they are both appealing options. To make this a little easier try choosing an item they always choose vs an item they may only sometimes choose.



“Biscuit or crisps?”



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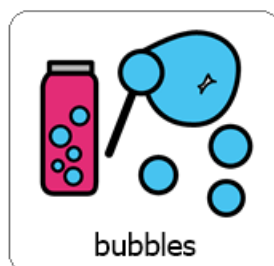


“Cars or bubbles?”



To make choices with photos/symbols

- Using photos or symbols can be more difficult as it is only an image of the object, so your child will not be able to touch, smell or experience it in the same way. Your Speech and Language Therapist will have discussed which method will be more suitable for your child.
- It is important that your child is able to understand what the photo or symbol means before you give them a choice using them, otherwise they will not know what they are being offered which may lead to frustration. If your child is new to photos/symbols, make the choice easier by showing the real life object alongside it.
- Follow the same steps for photos/symbols as you would with the objects (see above). Start with an easy choice and then gradually make it more difficult.
- Instead of showing the object, show your child the symbol or photo and say the words, e.g. “bubbles or balloon?”



“Bubbles or balloon?”

