

# Turn Taking

## What is turn taking?

**Turn-taking** is an important part of communication development. It helps us develop our reciprocal (two-way) interaction skills with others. It can also help children develop their attention and listening skills.

Some children with language and communication difficulties may find it difficult to take turns during play as well in conversation. Developing turn taking in games/activities first, helps children to learn the skills they can use later in conversation as their language develops. Below are some activities you may like to try to develop your child's turn taking skills.

## Activities to support turn taking:

- Ball/Bean bags: Sit opposite your child and throw the ball/bean bag, take turns in throwing the ball/bean bag to each other or into a basket
- Windup toys: Take it in turns to wind up the toy and send it to each other from across the table
- Posting boxes: take it in turns to post items into a post box. You could make this together from an old shoe box.
- Skittles and ball: take turns to knock down the skittles.
- Building blocks: take turns to add a brick each to build a tower using Duplo, blocks, foam bricks, Jenga). When you have finished you could practise 'ready, steady....go' as well before knocking it down
- Everyday chores: take turns putting one item each in the washing in the machine, spooning ingredients into a mixing bowl, picking one item each out of a shopping bag
- Toy car: Take turns pushing a car to each other or rolling it down a ramp.
- Inset Puzzles: Take turns putting one piece of the puzzle in each.
- Feely bags: Take turns to choose one item each from the bag then talk about what you found
- Bath time: Take turns pouring water in the bath
- Bubbles: Take turns blowing bubbles
- Musical instruments: Take turns banging a drum or shaking bells. You could change the rhythm you use each time and see if your child can copy you

## REMEMBER

- Start by practising turn taking with just you and your child
- Minimise/reduce any distractions for them e.g. turn the television off, put your phone away, make sure any other siblings have something to do so you are not interrupted.
- Keep each turn really short to start with so that your child doesn't have to 'wait' long until it is their turn again.
- As they find this easier, use activities where you each have a longer turn.



- When they are able to take turns easily with you, start to introduce a sibling or peer into the activities as well. This will be harder to start with as they will have to 'wait' longer again for their turn.
- Use simple language to support turn taking and focus on what you want them to 'do' rather than what you don't want them to 'do' e.g. 'look', 'listen', 'waiting'.
- Using 'waiting hands' (hands flat on table while waiting for their turn) can be useful for children who find it hard not to touch/grab the items when it is someone else's turn.
- Use visuals (such as the ones below) and point to these as it's each person's turn. This will help them to visually see that it can be someone else's turn instead of theirs. You should model this yourself and your child may also point to these. It may be helpful to start off with photos of each person so that it is easier to identify whose turn it actually is.

