

Section 2.6

Learning to take the initiative/lead



Why is this important?

Being able to initiate an interaction demonstrates an awareness of the need to ask others for help in order have needs met. Children learn how to use their language and communication skills for specific purposes.

What to do

- Put out a selection of toys that will challenge (e.g. shape sorter, puzzle, book).
- Watch as the child chooses something. Show interest in sharing the activity by stretching your arms out towards the toy/child and saying 'Let's do the puzzle together'.
- As the child becomes familiar with the routine of an adult offering 'help', wait for him/her to bring the toy/book to you to show/request. It is important to join in straightaway so that the link is made between the request and the reward (i.e. doing the puzzle together).
- The best way is to encourage the use of 'more' as a request for a favoured activity to continue or be repeated (e.g. singing, bouncing, swinging).



Step up

- When the child is having trouble with, for example, posting a shape, know how long you can wait to see if the child asks for help.
- When reading a book together or singing a nursery rhyme, wait for the child to ask to do it again. Accept any sound or gesture as a request for reoccurrence.
- As you move to get ready to go out or prepare a snack, encourage the child to get you to open the door, cupboard or drawer so that the activity can get under way.

Step down

- Try doing this activity with food: give the child a drink with the lid on or a banana that's not peeled so that he/she has to initiate the request to open it.
- Prompt the child to want to include you by stretching out your hands as you offer to join in.
- Use hand-on-hand help with a puzzle piece, a shape sorter or turning the pages of a book.
- Prompt a repetition of a song by beginning to hum the tune.

