

Section 2.9

Learning to ask for things by gesturing

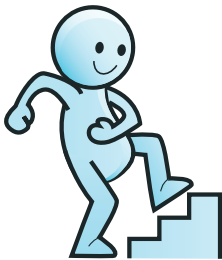


Why is this important?

Gestures provide children with the non-verbal means to ask for something. Gestures provide a visual cue about what is going to happen next and, when used in tandem with words, give additional information to help understand verbal language/speech/what is said.

What to do

- Use gestures for everyday objects/actions (e.g. drink, eat, wash (face/hands), brush (hair/teeth), banana). These can be signs or natural gestures, as might be used in a game of charades.
- When the child 'asks' for a drink by reaching, pointing or looking towards the cup, use the gesture for 'drink'. Then mould the child's hand into the 'drink' gesture, saying the word as the gesture is performed and then give the child the drink immediately.
- Repeat this every time the child wants a drink, etc.
N.B. Gestures/signs always need to be accompanied by the spoken word.



Step up

- Introduce more gestures so that gestures can be combined (e.g. 'drink gone' and 'more drink').

Step down

- Work on encouraging the child to use only one gesture to begin with. Once they've got the hang of this, introduce another.
- You will continue to gesture all the time, however, as you support the child's understanding of the words you are using.
- When the child 'asks' for a drink, offer a choice: 'Do you want *drink* or *wash*?' Gesture the key words.
- Limit the number of words/gestures you introduce but use them frequently, engineering opportunities for repetition.

