

# Social Communication Strategies

Social communication (pragmatics) refers to a synergistic behavior concept that groups social skills (i.e., social reciprocity and social interaction) with communication and language skills (Baldwin, Moore, & Dunham, 1995). According to Baldwin and colleagues (1995), joint attention and social reciprocity plays an important role in language acquisition. A few components of social communication include politeness, prosody (patterns of stress and intonation in language), eye contact, turn-taking, topic maintenance in conversation, gestures, and emotional competence. Social communication facilitates social relationships with others and the ability to work and play collaboratively with others. To see a full list of components of social communication, [click here](#).

Children at times need an extra boost on reading and understanding social cues and following social norms. Here are some activities that you can do with your child to help him or her improve on her social communication skills.

**Eye Contact** allows others to know that they have your attention and assurance that you're listening.

- Have a staring contest to encourage your child to look at you
- Encourage eye contact by saying, "I can't see your eyes" or "please look at me"
- Physically move a desired item that your child is looking at towards your eyes
- Get down on your child's eye level when you are speaking to him

**Reading Faces** helps children understand and interpret emotions.

- Act out expressions and have your child guess the emotion (e.g., sad, happy, silly, angry, etc.).
- Have your child mirror and label your emotion so that they get comfortable with expressing themselves.
- Use a mirror so that your child knows what each facial expression looks like

**Taking Turns**

- In a one-on-one structured setting, teach your child what taking turn looks like
- Introduce simple structured games to facilitate turn-taking (e.g., placing chips into the Connect Four, putting puzzle pieces onto a board, etc.)
- Indicate whose turn it is by saying, "it's daddy's turn," or "it's your turn"
- Use visual cues to indicate whose turn it is. For example, the person holding the ball gets to talk

**Shared attention**

- Use visuals to help your child focus on an activity
- Speak loudly and clearly using age-appropriate language to engage your child
- Give your child time to process information; pause often
- Use your child's interest (e.g., toys, activities, topics of conversation) as a starting point to facilitate attention
- Praise your child when he is engaged in good attention skills

## References

Baldwin, D. A., Moore, C., & Dunham, P. J. (1995). Understanding the link between joint attention and language. *Joint attention: Its origins and role in development*, 131-158.

Components of social communication (PDF file). Retrieved from [http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/ASHA/Practice\\_Portal/Clinical\\_Topics/Social\\_Communication\\_Disorders\\_in\\_School-Age\\_Children/Components-of-Social-Communication.pdf](http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/ASHA/Practice_Portal/Clinical_Topics/Social_Communication_Disorders_in_School-Age_Children/Components-of-Social-Communication.pdf)

