



# Follow the Child's Lead in Conversations

Follow the child's lead means letting children **start** the conversation and then responding with interest to what they have said or communicated. When you **wait** (without speaking) to give children an opportunity to **start** a conversation, they may communicate with sounds, gestures or words. Child-led conversations motivate children to communicate, support their language development and are associated with later academic success. Here are some fun things to try throughout the day:

## Play Time

Get down on the floor to observe and listen while the child is playing. What's interesting to them? If they start an interaction, follow their lead and respond with a comment. You can join in and copy their actions and words, then wait to see if they'll respond. If the child communicates, respond immediately with interest to keep the interaction going.

## Daily Activities

Give the child a "job" to help with daily tasks like tidying toys or sweeping. Wait for up to 5 seconds while looking at the child to give them a chance to start a conversation. For example, if the child says, "Uh-oh!" because they are having trouble sweeping, you can follow their lead with a related comment like, "Uh oh! It's hard to sweep up all the dirt!"



## On the Go

At the grocery store, pause the cart in an area with food the child enjoys to give them a chance to start the interaction. For example, if you pause in the cereal aisle the child may point to a favourite type of cereal. Follow their lead and say something about what they've noticed, such as, "That's your favourite!" or "We have that cereal at home."

## Book Reading

While reading a familiar book, don't worry about reading the text from start to finish. Instead, wait to see what the child points out when you open the book. Make an enthusiastic comment about whatever the child finds interesting and then wait again. You may even go back to previous pages to keep an interesting conversation going.



## Notes