

Choice making

Children at an early communication need lots of opportunities and help to practise giving messages.

Choice making is a good way to help communication.

How to do it

Children need lots of practise to help make a choice. Before making a choice between two things children need to be able to:

- Look, reach or explore one object
- Show you they want or do not want one object

When your child can do this, you can start to offer a choice of two things. You can build this up by:

- Offering a choice between something they really like and something they do not like
- Make a choice between 2 things they like
- Helping them to make choices at different times of the day

To help your child make a choice:

1. Hold the objects in front of them – 1 in each hand
2. Say the names of the objects – ‘bubbles or book’
3. Pause and wait – give your child time. It may take around 10 seconds or more to respond
4. Look for a response – your child could point with their finger, look at the object, reach, sign or say the word. This is all good communication. Accept any way they show their choice.
5. Say the name of the choice your child has made – offer them the object

If your child finds choosing between two hard, go back a step. Try offering a liked and not liked item. Offer a choice of one object to see if they show interest in it or not. They are still making a choice if you offer one object.

What to use

Children find it easier to make choices with real objects. Favourite toys, foods or activities that they know are good things to start with.

You can also try offering choices with photographs, pictures, symbols or even the written word if your child understands these.

When to do choice making

You can do choice making at any time of the day with your child. You can try it:

- At snack time – choice of foods
- With toys or games – book or bubbles,
- With people games – tickles or squeeze, spin or jumps
- With songs – row the boat or twinkle twinkle,
- DVD/TV shows – Moana or Frozen
- At bath time – bath or shower, jug or duck
- Activities – swing or slide
- Places to go – park or swimming

When your child begins to give messages clearly when making choices, try choosing between a choice of 3 and more. Remember to show and talk about their choice as they explore.

See our [choice making video](#) on the Barnsley speech and language therapy Youtube channel. You can also find more videos on our early language and AAC playlists to help your child's communication.

