



Chapter 3

Guidelines for teaching language

A child who is deaf or cannot hear well learns to communicate by seeing. He will not learn words like others do, just by listening to people talk. He needs a longer time and more help to learn a language — whether by watching and listening to people talk, or by seeing them sign. He may start earlier than other children to pay attention to written words. When he sees written words, such as his own name, he can make the connection between a word and its meaning.

The guidelines in this chapter can make it easier for parents and others to teach children how to use a language. Try using these guidelines while working on the activities in this book.

Communicate as much as you can

Helping deaf children learn a language is the most important thing that parents and others can do. Even if people generally do not talk to children as they do their work, your child needs everyone to make extra efforts to speak to her. Communication is the only way she will learn.

Sometimes parents may feel ashamed of a child who cannot hear well. Or the child may be protected too much. But a child needs to take part in her family's activities. Being left alone will stop her from learning many things.

Throughout the day, look for opportunities to communicate with your child. Include her in activities with other people, so she gets used to seeing and hearing different people communicate. Encourage the whole family — brothers, sisters, grandparents, and other relatives — to do this too.



A child needs to take part in her family's activities.

Fitting activities into your family's daily life

It is important to think about how to support your child's development in ways that make sense for your family. Some of the activities in this book will take extra time to do or may change the way you usually do things.

Your child will learn better when teaching becomes a part of everyday activities.

- Talk or sign to your child while you do activities together, like eating, bathing, changing clothes, and so on. These are good times to talk and sign because you are close to your child and he is usually paying attention to you.



Lihua's mother is using home signs to communicate.

To describe what you do, use the same signs or words for the same things, each time. This will help your child learn the meaning of signs and words, and help him to use signs and words (see Chapter 4, pages 37 to 46).

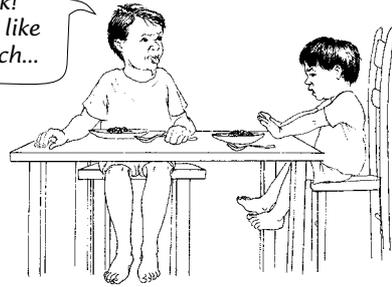
- As much as possible, keep your child nearby while you work. Make many short comments about what you are doing.



Cesar's mother is using sign language to communicate.

- Talk and sign about what you think your child is seeing, doing, and feeling, as if you were him. Show your feelings on your face and with your body.

Yuck!
Don't like
spinach...



Jawad's cousin is using words and expressions on the face to communicate.

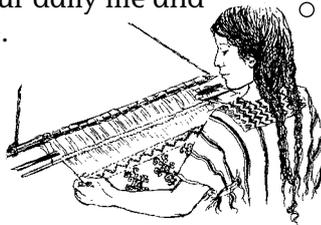
- Follow the child's interests. Make activities using things your child is interested in.

A pineapple!
What else do
we need?



BE REALISTIC

- Try to be realistic about how much time you and others can spend working with your child.
- Try to adapt activities so they fit more easily into your daily life and take less time.



When I weave, I can talk about colors, and Teresa will learn the names of colors when she gives me the yarn.

- Try breaking large tasks into smaller, easier steps. This way you will see progress and not get discouraged.

I want Ravi to learn to say his name.



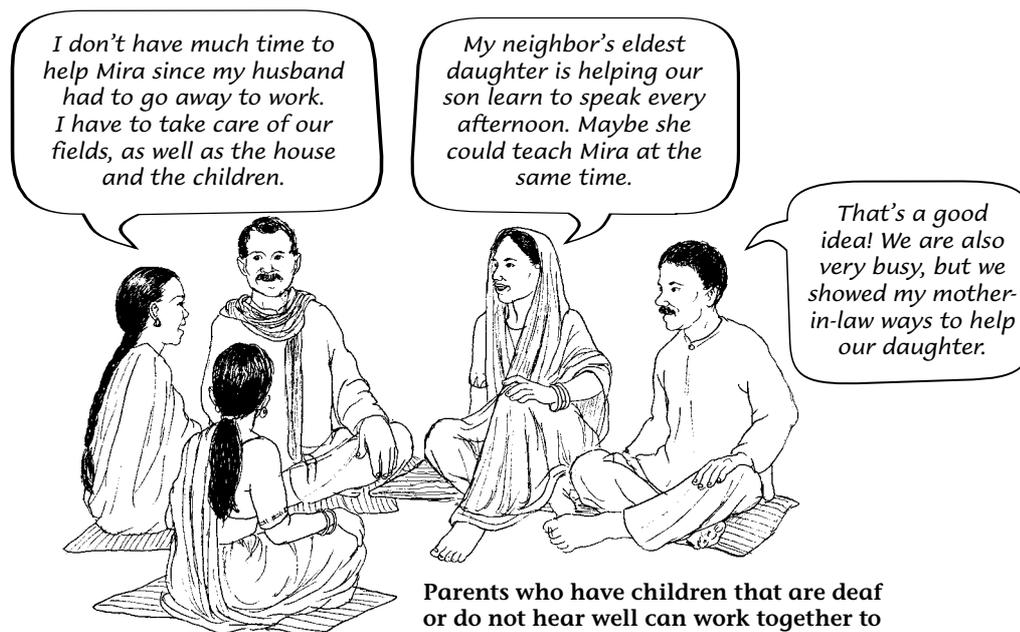
Why not start with each separate sound first — like 'Ra' and 'vi'?



Many people can help do these activities

Though children need the care and love of both their parents, parents do not have to be a child's only teachers. Let friends, neighbors, and other family members help. Make sure a deaf child plays with other children. Get to know deaf people who use the local sign language. It is especially important for the child who is deaf or cannot hear well to have many people doing activities with him because:

- it will help him learn to communicate with many people including other deaf people.
- he will learn to get along with different people.
- other people will learn how to interact with deaf people.



Some people, sometimes even close family members, may not want to spend time with deaf children. Other people, even if they want to help, do not know how. You can help them learn about deafness and how being deaf makes it more difficult for someone to learn a language. They may become more comfortable if they know what to do.

Share what you have learned about hearing problems, the activities you and your child are working on, and the reasons for doing these activities.

TALK WITH YOUR FAMILY

Everyone in a family plays a role in a child's life. Each person caring for a child, especially one with special needs, may have different ideas about the best way to raise and help that child. It is important for all those who care for the child to find time to talk together and understand each



Let me watch Thuy for the weekend so you can get some rest.

others' ideas. And if one of you is feeling tired or discouraged, the others may be able to help.

ASK OTHERS FOR HELP

Parents can ask other community members and neighbors to help care for the deaf child.

Meet the deaf people in your community. Deaf adults remember what it felt like to be deaf children. They will probably be happy to help your family and your child.

Hearing people who use sign language can help you communicate with deaf adults if you do not know sign language.

Talk to a health worker or school teacher, or someone that teaches children who are deaf. This is especially helpful if your child does not seem to be learning new skills after several months.

When I was little, my parents used to take me to the market with them.

Mariama is explaining how her parents would bring her to the market...



I will write to Mrs. Patel. She is a deaf teacher in the city.

Children can help with these activities

Children can be very helpful. Usually brothers, sisters, and other friends of a deaf child learn sign language very quickly. As much as possible, let children take part in these activities.

Younger children can join the activities and older children can be teachers if you show them what to do. They can also teach a deaf child other skills and include him in their play. This will help him make friends and learn how to behave with others. This will also help the children who can hear learn about deafness and how to communicate with deaf children.



Older children are often natural teachers, and enjoy doing activities with younger children.

Suggestions for helping your child learn

LET YOUR CHILD TAKE THE LEAD

Children are most eager to learn when they are doing something they like. If your child seems interested in something, or likes to play with a special toy, make that an opportunity to help her communicate or learn.

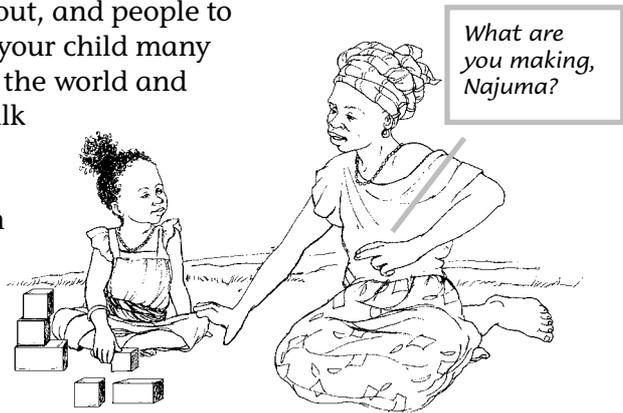


Let your child take the lead. It will keep her interested and help her learn that her decisions are important. She will know that she has some control over what happens. This is especially important for girls. In many places, girls are expected to be quiet and to follow instructions. Helping a girl make decisions and follow her own ideas can strengthen her confidence and abilities.

But just because you let your child take the lead does not mean you allow her to act badly or get into dangerous situations. Your guidance is important. And the knowledge you have about her language needs and abilities can help you guide her play so that she will learn.

MAKE COMMUNICATING FUN AND USEFUL

Children enjoy communicating when they have real things to sign or talk about, and people to sign or talk with. Try to give your child many opportunities to learn about the world and encourage her to sign and talk about what she is learning. Making conversation with your child will help her learn faster than if you ask her only to memorize and repeat signs and words.

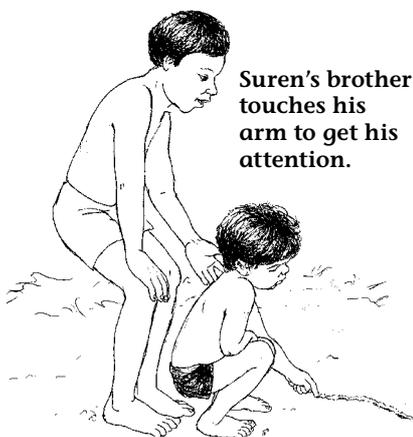


LET YOUR CHILD HELP YOU DO WORK

As your child helps you do your work, communicate with him about what you are doing. Use words or signs to ask him to help you do something, to get you tools, or to help in other ways. Your child will be more interested in paying attention and communicating when he is helping you do something you both value.

GET YOUR CHILD'S ATTENTION BEFORE YOU COMMUNICATE

A child who cannot hear well needs to watch your lips move or see you gesture or sign to understand you. He also gets a lot of information seeing the look on your face. So it is important to wait until he is looking at you before you begin to talk or sign.

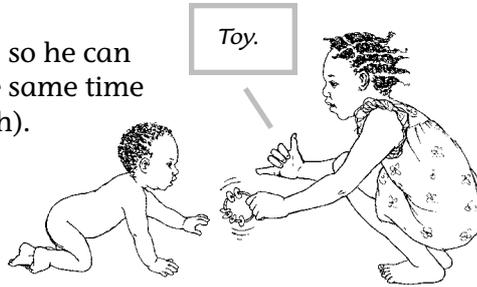


To get a child's attention, move or wave your hand where he can see you, call his name, touch him, or hit a nearby object to make a loud noise so the child can feel the vibrations.

Other ways to get your child's attention

If your child is more interested in an object than in what you are communicating, you can get his attention by stopping all action, bringing the object close to your face, or gesturing or signing near the object.

- Stop all action. If you completely stop moving, especially with an object in your hand, your child will probably look at you to see why you have stopped.
- Bring the object close to your face, so he can see your face and the object at the same time (if you want him to see your mouth).
- Point to or sign near the object (if you want him to learn a sign for the object).



To call his attention to the sign, Obasi's sister is signing near his toy.

At first, it can be hard to remember to get your child's full attention before you begin to communicate. But it gets much easier with practice.

SIGN OR TALK FACE TO FACE, AT EYE LEVEL

Your child will be able to understand more of what you say or sign if you squat down close to her (within about 1 meter, or 3 feet), and look her in the eye as you speak or sign.

If possible, try to have light from the sun or a lamp shining on your face, not from behind you. When the light comes from behind you, your face and hands will be in a shadow and harder to see.

Mariana's mother is playing a clapping game with her.



It will be easier for your child to understand spoken words if you talk naturally and in a clear voice. Do not shout. Shouting makes the words harder to understand. Speak in short, simple sentences so you do not confuse her. It will be easier for your child to see your lips move if you do not have anything in or in front of your mouth while you are speaking.



If your child can hear a little

These suggestions may help her hear sounds a little better.

- Cupping a hand behind the ear can help more sound reach the ear.



- Speaking close to a child's ear can help her hear better. This makes sounds louder and lessens the amount of noise from the environment. Remember she also needs to see your face while you are talking to her.



USE GESTURES, TOUCH, AND EXPRESSIONS ON THE FACE

All people use body movements, touch, and expressions on the face to help people understand what they want to say. Children often use touch to communicate with each other. Children who cannot hear well find touch extremely useful. A touch will help communicate your care and concern in a way that nothing else can. Sometimes movements and looks can take the place of a word or sign. At other times they add information to words and signs.



Help your child by using your body and face to communicate as much as possible. First, try to notice how you already do this. Then look for ways to add to what you do.

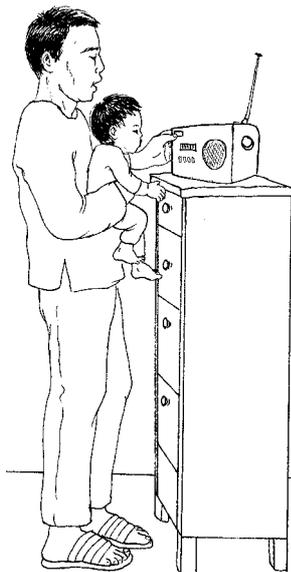
Try to make sure that the messages you send with your body and face are the same as those you send with words and signs. If the messages of your face do not match your words, your child will be confused.



Maria's angry expression sends a different message than her kind words. This is confusing.

REDUCE BACKGROUND DISTRACTIONS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Background distractions, such as other children playing near your child, can make activities more difficult or even impossible to do. You can help by finding a place with few distractions. Try to get rid of any noises that are not necessary. When a room is noisy, a child who cannot hear well finds it more difficult to understand what is being said.



This father is shutting off the radio before playing with his son.

CHANGE ACTIVITIES TO SUIT YOUR CHILD

The activities in this book can help your child learn to communicate. But they are just examples of activities that can help a child learn. Watch your child carefully to see what interests him and makes him want to communicate — and also watch for what upsets him and makes him want to stop. Then you can think of ways to adapt the activities in this book so they will work better for your child and fit more easily into your family's daily activities.

You can also adapt these activities so they fit with your child's abilities. For example:

- If a child can hear some speech sounds, help him learn simple words by giving them emphasis and repeating them. Then use the words often throughout the day.



- If a child cannot hear speech sounds well, teach everyone some signs to use with him. See Chapter 8 for information about teaching sign language.



- If your child can hear some of the sounds around her, everyone can help her pay attention to sounds by pointing them out.



Helping your child grow

If you make these activities part of your family's everyday life, your child will have a childhood that is full of fun and learning. As he grows up he can:

join in family conversations



develop friendships with other children



go to school and learn a trade



meet other children and adults who are deaf or cannot hear well



and years from now, marry and have a family of his own.

He will be able to support his family and be involved in the community.



As you do the activities in this book, try to:

- be patient. Very young children can only pay attention for a few minutes at a time.
- be light-hearted. Learning activities will work only if they are fun for both of you.

Do not get discouraged. Do not expect immediate changes in a child's behavior. Your child will gain something from every activity, even if you do not notice it right away.

MAKE LEARNING FUN

- ~ Be patient
- ~ Be positive
- ~ Keep activities short

