



Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

Using Intensive Interaction to Support Communication

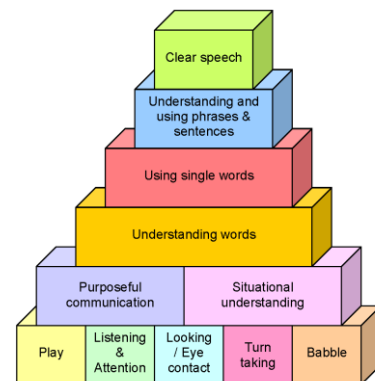
What is Intensive Interaction?

Intensive Interaction is a way to help children who find it hard to talk or play with others. It is child-led, which means the child is in charge, and it feels like play.

This approach helps children learn that their way of communicating is OK. It encourages them to do more of it.

Intensive Interaction is helpful for children who:

- Have learning difficulties
- Have problems with their hearing, sight, or senses
- Find it hard to connect with others



This method helps children learn the **Fundamentals of Communication**. These are the basic skills we need to communicate. They include:

- Looking at someone and enjoying being with them
- Using and understanding eye contact and facial expressions
- Sharing space with someone
- Using and understanding touch, like a pat or high-five
- Making sounds (sometimes this leads to speech)
- Taking turns and joining in back-and-forth actions with others

These are the first steps to learning how to talk and listen

What Does It Look Like?

Intensive Interaction is like having a conversation without words.

An adult might:

- Copy the child's sounds or movements
- Smile when the child smiles
- Clap hands with the child
- Take turns playing with instruments
- Look at or listen to something together
- The child leads the activity, and the adult follows. If the child shows they want to stop, the adult should stop too.

What Are the Benefits?

This approach has many benefits. It can help children:

- Start interactions more often
- Make more eye contact or smile at others
- Use more sounds to communicate
- Share attention with someone else (like looking at the same toy or object)
- Learn that what they do causes something to happen (for example: making a noise gets a reaction)
- Children who find it hard to connect with people may need help learning how to do this. Communication is how we connect. Intensive Interaction helps children build that connection.

How Can We Measure Progress?

Progress with Intensive Interaction is often slow and small, but important. Adults can look for changes in how the child: joins in with others, makes eye contact, makes sounds, plays or interacts for longer, takes turns with another person. Recording it could look like this:

How did the child start the interaction?	What happened when an adult responded/ mirrored the action?	How long did the interaction last?
Child looked towards adult and smiled	Child looked towards and away from adult for a number of turns, smiling and laughing each time the child looked towards adult.	3 minutes
Child vocalised "oooo"	Adult joined in, child stopped vocalising and looked away.	10 seconds

Ways to check progress:

1. Watch and write down what happens

- Note what the child does
- How the adult responds
- What is new or different



2. Take short videos (if allowed)

- Watching videos can show how the child's skills change over time

3. Use a simple checklist

- Mark if the child is looking, making sounds, smiling, or joining in

4. Celebrate small changes

- Every small step matters! A child turning to look at someone or copying a sound is a big success.



For more information, or to see videos of Intensive Interaction in action please visit: The Intensive Interaction Institute: /www.intensiveinteraction.org/

If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about the impact of your child's communication differences, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice: [York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Speech and language therapy \(yorkhospitals.nhs.uk\)](http://yorkhospitals.nhs.uk)
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details