

Especially for parents of infants!

Give Me, Give Me!

Gestures and Signing

Before infants learn to talk, they often use gestures to let others know what they want. This handout includes ideas for helping your child use gestures to ask for what she wants.

What is the practice?

Play games where your child uses gestures to ask for something or to continue playing a game. It won't take long for your child to figure things out. She will start using different movements and gestures to get you to do something she wants.

What does the practice look like?

A one-year-old is sitting on the floor dropping toys and other objects into a container. The child dumps everything out and starts over. Mom starts handing the toys and other objects to her child. Sometimes Mom waits until her child "asks" for another thing by reaching or looking at the object. Any time the child extends her hand toward a toy, Mom gives her child another object. The child starts "asking" for more objects by holding her hand out. Before long, the baby is using a palms-up gesture to have her mom hand things to her.



How do you do the practice?

This practice involves you and your child playing together with some toys or other objects. The main idea is to add "pauses" into the parent-child play. Pauses will help your child "ask" for a toy or object so you will continue playing with her.

- Start by identifying toys and other materials that your child likes. Small objects that your child can hold in one hand work best.
- Your child should be in a comfortable position where her hands are free to play with the toys or objects. This can be in a highchair or walker. Sitting on the floor or in your lap. Anywhere or anyplace will do.
- Start the game by handing something to your child. Follow your child's lead. Hand her another toy or object anytime she seems interested in playing with something new. Talk about what your child is doing.
- Wait until your child shows some sign that she wants another object. Anytime your child tries to get you to give her another object hand him the toy. Sometimes wait a bit longer to encourage her to use a palms-up request gesture.
- Games that involve your child "giving" an object in exchange for another work best. Stacking rings. Dropping toys in a bucket. Rolling a ball back-and-forth. Any of these will get your child to "ask for more."

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child reach more often for another object?
- Does your child look at you when asking for something?
- Does your child use a "give me" gesture to get you to hand her an object?

Take a look at more “Give Me, Give Me” play

Asking for “More”

Matthew’s snack times are full of asking for “more.” The 8-month-old boy loves to eat dry cereal. His mom uses this interest as part of a game of “Tell Me What You Want.” Mom starts snack time by placing four or five cereal bits on Matthew’s highchair tray. Next she hands pieces of cereal to Matthew. Finally, Mom waits for Matthew to ask for more by looking at her or gesturing toward the cereal. Mom hands another bite of cereal to Matthew by holding her hand out palm up. Her son takes the cereal from her hand. Matthew is catching on. He now asks for things by holding out his hand to have someone give him something he wants.



Take a Boat Ride

One of 9-month-old Ava's favorite things is bath time. She loves to play with a boat that has space for putting things inside so they can “take a ride.” She delights in putting things in and taking them out of the boat. Her father plays a special kind of give-and-take game with her. Ava will ask her dad for toys by holding her hand out to her father. After all the toys are in the boat, she hands them back to her father. He drops them into the tub while saying “boom” each time one makes a splash. Ava loves to see her dad drop the toys in the water. Each time she splashes with her hands and tries saying something that sounds like “boom.”

First Signs

Will is 10 months old and has a hearing impairment. He becomes a bit irritated when he is trying to “tell” someone that he wants something or wants to play. Mom and Dad have started using sign language with Will. They are using signs like *more*, *eat*, *drink*, *again*, *yes*, and *no*. They use the sign for **more** to help Will ask for more food or drink. The sign for **eat** is used to communicate hunger. They use the sign for **drink** to have Will ask for water or milk when he is thirsty. Will uses the sign for **again** to have Mom or Dad play a game over and over. He also signs **again** to look at a book one more time.

