

Create Opportunities for Your Child to Lead

Sometimes OWLing isn't enough. If your child doesn't start an interaction with you – even when you're careful to wait for it – she may need more help from you. The following suggestions will help you create more opportunities for her to take the lead.

These ideas may not work right away. That may be frustrating for both of you, but it doesn't mean they won't work after a while. If you create an opportunity and your child doesn't take the lead, just show her what she could do or say and then carry on with the activity. She'll learn from your example, and next time she may start the interaction.

Want Teddy!



By putting his favourite toy out of reach, Miguel's mom creates an opportunity for him to ask for his teddy bear.

Help your child make a request

Instead of rushing to give your child something you know she'll want, create an opportunity for her to ask for it. Listed below are some ideas for helping your child make a request.

♦ **Place a Favourite Object out of Reach ... Then Wait:** When your child wants an object, place it in her view but out of her reach and then wait until she does something to ask for it. As soon as she asks for the object, give it to her.

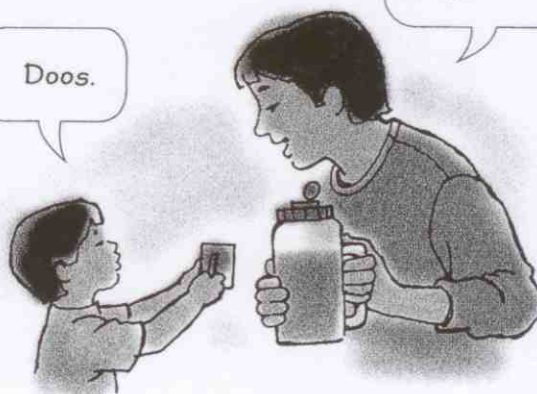
♦ **Offer a Little Bit ... Then Wait:**

Instead of giving your child a big piece of apple or a full cup of juice, give her a little bit, then *wait* for her to ask for more. As soon as she does, give her a little bit more, then wait again.

By giving Graham just a sip of juice, Dad creates an opportunity for Graham to ask for more.

Doos.

Juice. More juice!



♦ **Choose an Activity That Your Child Can't Do Without Your Help ...**

Then Wait: Children love bubbles, wind-up toys and musical toys. Because your child needs your help to make these toys work, you can use them to encourage her to lead the interaction. Instead of immediately blowing the bubbles, winding up the toy or turning on the music, wait to create an opportunity for your child to ask for your help. When she asks for help, give it to her. But wind the toy up just a bit, or blow just a few bubbles at a time. That way you'll give her more chances to ask you to do it again.

After the wind-up toy stops, Dad waits, creating an opportunity for Sofia to ask him to wind it up again.



♦ **Offer a Choice ... Then Wait:** It's easier for a child to choose when you give her just two choices.

Jordan's mom creates an opportunity for him to choose by reaching for the object he wants.

♦ **Pause a Familiar Activity ... Then Wait:**

When you and your child are doing something that can be repeated over and over – such as playing Tickle, swinging on a swing or singing a song – pause the activity from time to time. Then your child can ask you to continue.

When Dad stops bouncing Hanifa up and down, she flaps her arms to tell him to keep going.



Help your child make a comment or ask a question

♦ **Change a Familiar Activity ... Then Wait:** Instead of just pausing in the middle of a familiar activity or routine, you can also change it or leave out a step. The surprise creates an opportunity for your child to react and start an interaction by making a comment or asking you a question.

When Scott's dad does something wrong, Scott gets a chance to let him know he made a "mistake."



Hey ... car!



♦ **Hide Objects in Surprising Places ... Then Wait:** Let your child find a surprise to create an opportunity for him to tell you about it.

Brandon's mom has hidden a toy where Brandon will find it, creating an opportunity for him to tell her about the surprise.

♦ **When Things Go Wrong ... Wait:** Every day, little things go wrong. Spoons fall on the floor, crayons break and juice gets spilled. Instead of fixing these little problems right away, *wait* a few seconds to see what your child will do or say. You'll be creating an opportunity for her to send you a message.

Instead of picking up Robert's cookie immediately, his mom waits and watches him. Then Robert lets her know that his cookie has fallen on the floor.

