

A message for you

Carry out these fun activities with your child to encourage their early communication skills

'Communication' is an excellent theme for exploring a wide range of exciting play and craft activities in the early years setting. For example, creative skills can be developed by constructing model telephones that represent a variety of styles and designs such as old, new, futuristic, 'funky' or fantasy. Social skills can

be developed during role play based on the importance of communication at work, especially for people that work in the emergency services, and language skills can be developed while writing letters, organising pen friends or preparing information labels for an interactive display.

Smiley email

Encourage your child's computer skills by helping them to send a special email to a friend or relative who will be able to send a reply. Begin by helping your child to use a simple drawing or painting program, on the computer, to create a bold smiley-face picture. Show your child how to send the smiley-face attachment to someone special using email. Invite your child to help you check the 'inbox' for the reply. Print the reply for your child to keep and talk about how you could send a happy-face picture to a friend or relative who does not have access to a computer.



If appropriate, find out in advance who will enjoy receiving and replying to your child's email.

Message flags

Explore the exciting world of secret codes and hidden messages by helping your child to make and decorate a set of coded flags. Show your child the 'Message flags' photocopiable sheet (see opposite) and talk about the possible meaning of each picture, for example, 'pointed toes' could mean 'jump' or 'dance', 'one foot' could mean 'hop' or 'skip', 'two feet' could mean 'run' or 'walk' and 'two hands' could mean 'clap' or 'stop'. Help your child to colour in and cut out the pictures. Attach each picture to a stick or strip of stiff card to create four flags. Hold up the flags, one at a time, and invite your child to follow the secret code by jumping, hopping, running and clapping accordingly.



Invite your child to hold up the flags, one at a time, for you to follow the code and perform the appropriate actions.

Send the message

Explain to your child that in the past, before telephones, computers and even the postal service, people were still able to communicate over long distances, using a variety of different ways. Encourage your child's inquisitive nature by helping them to use books from your local library to find out about unusual forms of communication, past and present, for example, drums, flags, Morse code and carrier pigeons.



Help your child to find out all about Braille and why it is such an important form of communication to many people.

Useful books and resources

- *My First Signs* (Child's Play in association with the National Deaf Children's Society, or visit www.ndcs.org.uk)
- *Little Miss Chatterbox* by Roger Hargreaves (Egmont Books).
- *The Jolly Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg (Little Brown and Company).
- *A Life Like Mine* (Dorling Kindersley in association with UNICEF).
- *My First Book of Knowledge* by Angela Wilkes (Kingfisher Books).



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