

Teaching Language Using People Play Activities



People Play enhances interaction by focusing on the bond between the child and the engaging adult, which is ideal for children developing shared attention and regulation skills. These games effectively build connection and communication, providing clear, motivating chances for children to participate actively in fun activities.

People Play activities are also great for building language with AAC because they limit the demand for the child to juggle so many points of attention and action (i.e., their body, ideas, you, an AAC device, and a toy). With simple strategies, you can model AAC and encourage AAC exploration during People Play activities that embrace each child's needs and interests.

People Play should be child-led, structured, and most importantly, fun!

Here's a summary for incorporating People Play in AAC routines:



1. Find the Fun: Choose enjoyable, interactive activities considering the child's sensory and social preferences. Ensure the activity has a clear structure and roles for both you and the child.



2. Be a Broken Record: Repeat actions, sounds, and words during the game. Use repetition to help the child understand the game and their role. Incorporate AAC by frequently using a specific word, demonstrating its use in the game.

3. Tempt a Turn: Pause for the child to take their turn, accepting any form of communication they use. Reward their participation with a fun response.



4. Wait with Wonder: Use cues and hints to encourage the child's participation. Be playful and engaging to assist the child in understanding when it's their turn.

5. Maintain a back-and-forth interaction for as long as the child is engaged. Vary actions, words, and sounds to sustain interest, and use opportunities to model AAC usage.

Here's an example of incorporating People Play and AAC strategies in a blowing bubbles game:

Be a Broken Record: Begin by sitting with the child and gently start to blow bubbles. Engage with fun phrases or playful sounds associated with bubbles, like "Pop!" or "Big bubble!" Whenever a bubble pops or floats away, narrate the action with specific sounds or words. Make these actions and words a consistent part of the activity. Simultaneously, model a relevant word on the AAC system, making sure to both say and show it, such as "bubble," "big," or "pop."

Tempt a Turn: Before beginning, decide the child's role. They might indicate wanting more bubbles by a gesture or using the AAC system. Please respond to all forms of communication and model the AAC word corresponding to their signals to reinforce meaning. This might include "more," "big," or "pop."

Resource credit: Tanna Neufeld, MS, CCC-SL, EI SLP & AAC Coach, AACcessible, www.aaccessible.org

Wait with Wonder: Pause between bubble blows, giving the child an expectant look or hints that more bubbles are coming. If they don't respond, offer stronger cues like showing the bubble wand and dipping it into the solution, then blow more bubbles per the established routine.

Keep it Up:

1. When the child signals to continue, blow more bubbles using the same sounds and words.
2. Introduce variety, such as blowing more giant bubbles or multiple small ones, and model new words or phrases on the AAC system.
3. Offer choices to the child, encouraging them to direct the bubble-blowing activity using gestures or the AAC system, such as choosing the bubble size or when to pop them.

People Play AAC Game Ideas:

Bouncing (on a lap or therapy ball).

Swinging in a blanket (two adults needed, one on each side of the blanket swing).

Airplane (Flying the child like an airplane and crashing them onto a bed or a couch).

Wheelbarrow Walking: Holding the child's legs while they walk on their hands, encouraging physical coordination and trust.

Row Your Boat: Sitting opposite each other, holding hands, and rocking back and forth singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

