

The Importance of WAITING

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As hard as is it, waiting is a powerful tool when helping children communicate.

WHY?

Waiting allows your child to figure out what has been said and to put together a response. For some kids, this can take quite a while. If you have ever learned a new language, you may be able to relate – it takes time to figure out what someone said *and* what you want to say *and* how to say it. If your communication partner doesn't give you some time, you miss your turn to talk. Waiting gives your child TIME to:

- Understand what is being asked of them
- Think of what they want to say back, or what they are expected to do, and
- Figure out how to say it or do it

Waiting also shows your child you expect them to do something, to respond in some way. If you keep filling in the silent space, your child may be quite happy to observe rather than to try to take their own turn. When you wait quietly, it shows you child it is their turn to communicate. When you keep talking, you are giving them more information to process, so it often takes them longer to respond, or they get confused and cannot figure out what to do.

HOW?

How do you use waiting? First, take your turn to communicate. Imitate something your child has done or said, make a comment about what is going on, give your child a choice, make your own toy move, etc. Then WAIT. Count to 5-10 slowly in your head without saying anything. This will feel like a long time, but often it is at the very end of wait time that children respond. You will find a good amount of time for your child, how long they need to take their own turn if they want. If your child doesn't respond or take a turn, that's fine. You can take another turn.

Remember to wait quietly and expectantly. You want your child to see and hear (in your silence) that you are waiting for them to respond. Look interested, lean forward, whatever you usually do to show another person you are listening.

WHEN?

At CICC we use waiting whenever we give a child a direction, ask them to make a choice, engage in conversation, or take turns playing with them. We get down on the child's level, give the direction clearly and simply, and then WAIT. Try it at home, and see what happens.

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