

Child Language – Following your child's lead

Information for patients, relatives and
carers

December 2023

What is following your child's lead?

Often when we play with our children it can be easy for us to unintentionally take over the play session without realising. We may choose the toys or decide how the toys are played with. We might tell them to "do this" or "do that" which they might not want to do. We might ask them "what's this" which they might not know how to answer.

All this can make the play more complicated than our children can cope with and they may lose interest or not want to play with us anymore. Following our children's lead is our way of letting them be in charge of their own play which they are likely to enjoy more.

Why is following your child's lead a good strategy?

Your child might have their own way of playing or having fun. By joining in with them and following their lead instead of trying to make them join in with you, you can interact in a way that is more interesting and motivating for them!

How do I follow my child's lead?

Join in with your child when they are playing with an object or item and let them play how they want to play. It does not matter if they aren't playing with the toy as they are meant to be or differently e.g. building a line of blocks on the ground rather than stacking them into a tower or opening and closing car doors rather than driving the car.

Activities to try at home:

- ☐ 1. Sit near your child
- ☐ 2. Copy boxes
- ☐ 3. Commenting during play



Sit Near Your Child

- This activity is for children who really do not like it when someone tries to play with them
- Lay some toys out for your child to play with
- Sit a few metres away and watch your child play, but do not say anything
- Make some excited sounds when your child does something interesting with the toys like “ooh” or “aah” or “wow”
- Try to gradually get closer to your child – but if your child starts to look bothered, back up and give them their space!
- Try and close the gap so that your child is happy to play with you right next to them – but still do not actually play ‘with’ your child yet

Copy Boxes

- Have two sets of the same item (this does not necessarily have to be toys; it could be everyday objects such as pots and pans)
- Copy what your child does as they explore the toys
- If your child takes your toy, let them, and take the other one (do not let them have both)
- Try to extend the play by making a change to what your child is doing, and see if they copy you
- If your child does not copy you, that is okay. Copy them and try again later
- Remember not to use too many words!

Commenting During Play

- While your child is playing or exploring an activity (e.g., garden, toy kitchen) sit near your child and comment on their play
- Comment on what they are looking at, what they are doing, and what they are making the toys do
- If your child gets upset, stop talking, but continue to sit alongside them

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have.

If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 0191 445 6129 (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday).

You can also email PALS at ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Mrs Trudie Davies,
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Trust Headquarters,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Sheriff Hill,
Gateshead,
NE9 6SX

The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website ([Privacy - QE Gateshead](#)) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request