

Pre-verbal Communication - Imitation

Information for patients, relatives and
carers

December 2023

What is imitation?

Imitation is another word for copying. It can involve copying other people's actions, sounds or even facial expressions.

Why is imitation important?

Copying is very important as your child is growing-up. By learning to copy sounds and actions they can learn new skills from people around them. Copying can help children develop their communications skills such as gesture and speech. However, some children might find copying a little difficult and need some extra support.

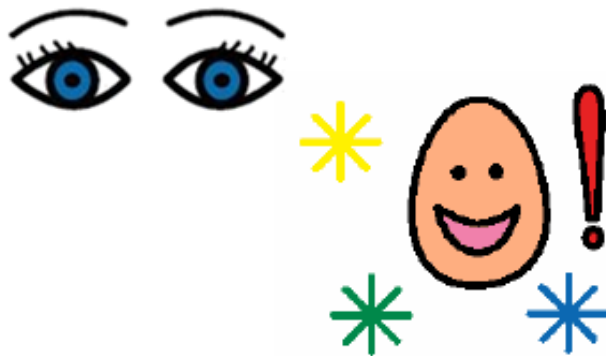
How do I do imitation?

Below is advice and general strategies that can help develop the skill:

- Come down to your child's level when communicating or playing so that they are able to see you better
- Copy your child when they play with their favourite toys
- Your child may need to hear or see something a few times before they copy it
- When playing games, leave gaps and little pauses in between – this gives your child a chance to give eye contact to show they want to carry on
- Your child will be more likely to take part if they are enjoying themselves!

Activities to try at home:

- ☐ 1. Copying Sounds
- ☐ 2. Copying Actions
- ☐ 3. Copying Songs



Copying Sounds:

- Sit with your child so they can see and hear you
- Try making some funny noises like animal noises to match toy animals to or even some funny noises when popping bubbles
- Leave little pauses between each noise and wait to see if your child copies the sound!
- If you make the game as fun as possible this will encourage your child to join in and copy you



Copying Actions:

- Pick a fun game to play with your child e.g. banging a drum, knocking over bricks, bouncing a ball or even pulling funny faces
- Start doing an action such as knocking off the bricks one by one, bouncing the ball really high or pulling a funny face
- You can use their name to get their attention
- Leave a gap between each action, to give your child time to copy



Copying Songs:

- Pick a rhyme that your child will enjoy such as *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Round and Round the Garden*, *Peek-A-Boo* or *This Little Piggy Went To Market*
- Sing the rhyme, leaving a gap after each part to see if your child repeats
- Try to build up excitement of the fun part of the rhyme and give your child a big smile or cuddle whenever they attempt to copy you
- Remember- repeat, repeat and repeat! This will help your child learn the rhyme and copy what you are saying/doing



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