

Language & Learning

Learning From My Family

Participating In Family Communication

How many chances does your baby have to take a conversational turn in your family communications? It is time to go to the store. You ask your teenager, “Do you want to go with us?” You tell your six-year old, “We need to go to the store. Let’s get your new school shoes.” You can also say or sign to your baby, “Go to the store!” with an excited face, and get an excited face in reply. Maybe store isn’t meaningful right now, but after several trips, it will be. You may even get “store” with a smile in response.

Every family has conversations. Some are predictable, such as dinner conversations about what happened during the day. Some happen unexpectedly, for example, when someone is sick and people in the family are worried. In almost every conversation, there is a place for your baby to see other people communicating with each other. The more conversations that take place using the modality you have chosen to use at home, the more communication your baby can use to learn about the world. Parents, brothers, sisters, and other family members need to talk or sign to each other clearly in the baby’s presence, not just when they are communicating with the baby. Communicate with each other:

- Before you go somewhere
- After you get back
- At the table
- At bedtime
- When you are all happy, excited, or sad

Everything you say is important, and every time you use your new communication skills, you will become more comfortable with them. As your baby grows, your communication skills will be ready.