

Providing Choices

What is it?

Caregivers **provide choices** by offering two objects or activities for a child to choose between, encouraging the communication of a choice by the child.

Providing choices includes setting up the environment to give children opportunities to choose activities, toys, and objects.

Use a communication board or pictures to help children with specific language needs make choices.

PC TALK Strategy Video
Providing Choices



<https://talk.ku.edu/tools/videos/>

Why is it important?

By having more than one object to **choose** from, children have more opportunities to practice communication and language.

Providing choices gives children a sense of control throughout their day. When children must do an activity, such as washing hands, choosing *how* to do it can help children follow directions.

Giving choices allows children to choose an object or activity in which they are most interested. When children are interested in what they are playing with or the activity they are doing, they are more likely to talk about it.

Getting Started

Think of some things young children have limited choices about. There are a lot! Children need certain things to stay healthy, like having their diapers changed and eating healthy foods.

*Sometimes these can be hard for young children and can cause frustration, crying, and even behavior issues like biting and hitting. We can help by **providing choices** as often as possible for things that can be optional, and providing choices about how to do activities or routines that aren't optional.*

Ways to Provide Choices

Present a child with two items and ask the child to pick one

"What shoes do you want to wear today, your red shoes or your blue shoes?"



Give choices only when children really have a choice

Ask yourself, would either choice I'm giving be acceptable for the child to choose?

✓ *"Would you like to play with the cars or the animals?"*

⊗ *"Do you want to put the toys away before going outside?"*

Show visuals of choices

When possible, hold up the choices or some visual representation of the choices to which children can respond. This helps young children understand the words you are saying.



When activities aren't optional, give choices about how to do them

There are certain things that aren't optional for children. Babies must have their diapers changed. Toddlers must wash their hands before and after meals. While the activities themselves are not optional, there are choices that can be made during those activities. *"Do you want to hold the rattle or the ball while I'm changing your diaper?" "Do you want to sing 'Row your Boat' or 'The Wheels on the Bus' while we wash hands?"*

POP in choices!

Think "POP" when you are providing choices.

Present two choices.

Hold the two choices apart so it is easier to see which the child is choosing.

Observe the child.

Pause to see if the child looks at one choice longer or reaches for a choice.

Provide the name for the child's choice.

As you are handing the child the object they chose, label it.

Provide Choices

Provide two objects or activities from which a child can choose, to encourage communication.





Providing Choices to Children Who Use Gestures & Sounds

Ideas for Providing Choices During Activities



Play

- Put a variety of toys out during play times, giving a choice of activities.
- Hold up two toys, a car and a doll, and let the child point to or reach for the object they want to play with.
- When a child is working on a shape sorter or puzzle, present two pieces to the child and ask, *"Do you want the square or the circle?"*
- When playing music, ask the child what they want to hear and give a choice between musicians or songs the child knows.



Daily Routines

- At snack or meal time, present two options. *"Do you want peas or carrots?"*
- During diapering, offer a choice of toys for the child to hold. *"Do you want the car or the rattle?"*
- Allow a child to choose their cup. *"Do you want the green cup or the blue cup?"*
- Set two outfits side by side to give the child a choice about what to wear. *"Do you want to wear the truck shirt or the flower shirt?"*

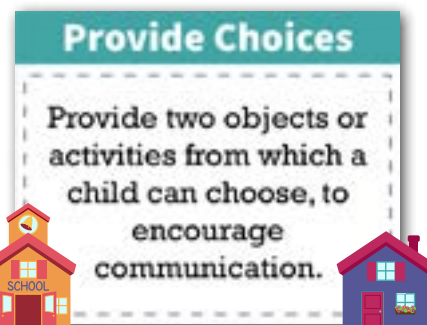


Books

- Hold up two books and have the child point to or reach for the book they want to look at. *"Do you want the animal book or train book?"*
- During storytime, offer a choice of seating. *"Do you want to sit on the floor or in a chair?"*
- After finishing a book, offer a choice to continue reading or transition to a new activity. *"Do you want to read more books or build with the blocks?"*



Did you know even infants make choices? Observe carefully to see what their choices are. Babies may kick more for a certain object, gaze at it, smile at it, or reach for it. If you hold objects at the baby's eye level, but farther apart from each other, it will be easier to tell which object they are choosing.





Providing Choices to Children Who Use Words

Ideas for Providing Choices During Activities

Play



- Offer a choice of two different kinds of toys to play with. *"Do you want the wooden blocks or the little people?"*
- When a child needs some direction in their play activity, offer a choice. *"Which would you like to play with - the dinosaurs or the puzzles?"*
- During an art activity, offer a choice of writing utensils, colors, and/or materials. *"Do you want markers or crayons?" "Which color paper would you like to use?"*
- Give choices that encourage social play. *"Do you want to play blocks with Lilly or kitchen with Malik?"*

Daily Routines



- Encourage children to help serve food by providing choices. *"Would you like to pass out the cheese or the grapes?"*
- During clean-up time, ask the child which toys they want to put away. *"Would you like to put away the blocks or the cars?"*
- When diapering, give choices of songs to sing. *"Do you want to sing 'ABCs' or 'Wheels on the Bus'?"*
- As a child becomes more independent with self-care, offer a choice of going alone or with an adult. *"Do you want to go potty by yourself or do you want me to come?"*

Books



- Make a variety of books available to children throughout the day.
- Present two books for children to choose to read. *"Do you want to read 'There was an Old Lady' or 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'?"*
- Have children choose where they want to sit and look at books. *"Would you like to sit at the table or sit on a pillow while you read?"*
- Let children choose who will read. *"Do you want to read the story or do you want me to read it to you?"*

Providing choices allows dual language learners to see words paired with objects and equips children with the words they need. If you speak both of the child's languages, offer the choice in one of their languages, and if they do not respond, offer the choice in their other language.

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