

HOW TO ENCOURAGE SPOKEN CONTRIBUTIONS

The language we, as adults, use has an effect on the type of response we receive from children. According to some research, (D.J.Wood et al. 1986), there are 5 main levels of control in conversation, some of which are more effective in encouraging spoken responses from children:

1. **Enforced repetition** e.g. 'Say – can I go to the toilet, please?'
2. **Two choice questions**(yes/no answer or choice of two alternatives)
e.g. 'Did you have a good time?'
'Did you go on the swings or the roundabout?'
3. **'Wh' type questions**- including 'wh' question words and 'how', 'tell me about' e.g. 'Where did you go at the weekend?'
4. **Personal contributions** e.g. 'I like going to the park too'
(comments/statements)
5. **Phatics** (conversational oil!) e.g. 'I see', 'Mmm', 'Oh, the park, how nice'
etc. etc.

Of these 5 types, **number 1 takes control of the conversation, while number 5 is least controlling, and tends to encourage longer responses.** Giving alternatives (number 2) can be helpful if you feel a child is struggling, and also helps you understand, if there is a speech difficulty for example.

We all use most of these. Listen to which you use most, and try the others to see what effect this has on the response you get from the child. Share what you have found out with other adults around the child e.g. parents,

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