

Strategy Spotlight Sheet: Waiting and Pausing

What It Is

Waiting and pausing means giving your child time to respond—whether it’s with a sound, a look, a gesture, or an action—before jumping in to help or talk.

Why It Helps

Young children need time to process what they hear and decide how to respond. When you pause, you give your child a chance to take the lead, try out their communication skills, and feel heard.

Try It Out

- During snack time, before offering more food, sign and say, “Eat more.” Then, pause—look at your child, wait a few seconds, and then present more of what the child wanted. You’ve just created an opportunity for your child to respond, and that’s so important!
- While playing with bubbles, blow a few. Then, pause—watch to see if your child reaches, looks at you, or makes a sound. Then, model “bubbles” or the approximation “buh-buh” before blowing more bubbles.
- Say something like “Your turn!” Then, wait and see what your child does next.

Next Steps

- Notice how your child responds when you give them space.
- Try slowly counting to 5 in your head while you pause.
- Tell your SLP what you notice. Brainstorm more moments where waiting might help your child take the lead.

Notes:
