

## **Intensive Interaction Guide**

Intensive Interaction is a highly effective approach for engaging with non-verbal individuals, particularly children with communication challenges. Here's a step-by-step guide for a teaching assistant to implement Intensive Interaction with a non-verbal child:

### **Prepare and Plan:**

Understand the child's individual needs, preferences, and communication style. Talk to the child's parents or caregivers and the classroom teacher to gather information.

Find a quiet and comfortable space where you and the child can interact without distractions.

Gather any communication aids or tools the child uses (e.g., picture cards, communication devices).

### **Build Trust and Rapport:**

Approach the child calmly and gently, maintaining eye contact but without overwhelming them.

Use a friendly tone of voice and a warm, welcoming smile.

Be patient and give the child time to become comfortable with your presence.

### **Observe and Imitate:**

Start by observing the child's non-verbal communication attempts. This may include gestures, facial expressions, body movements, or vocalisations.

Imitate the child's actions and sounds to establish a connection. This demonstrates that you are interested in their communication and are willing to engage on their terms.

### **Use Repetition and Reinforcement:**

Encourage the child's attempts at communication by repeating their actions, sounds, or gestures. This reinforces their efforts and shows that you value their communication.

Gradually introduce slight variations to keep the interaction engaging and help the child expand their communication repertoire.

### **Share Joint Attention:**

Find objects or activities that capture the child's interest, such as a favourite toy or a sensory activity. Use these items to create shared focus and engagement.

Comment on what the child is doing or express excitement to share in their experience.

### **Use Non-Verbal Communication:**

Communicate with the child using non-verbal cues like facial expressions, gestures, and body language. These can be more accessible and comfortable for non-verbal individuals.

Encourage the child to use non-verbal communication to express their wants and needs.

**Respect and Wait:**

Give the child plenty of time to respond or initiate interactions. Non-verbal individuals may need extra time to process and react.

Be patient and avoid putting pressure on the child to perform or respond in a specific way.

**Expand Communication:**

Gradually introduce new communication tools or strategies, such as using picture cards or a communication device if appropriate.

Continue to support and reinforce the child's communication attempts, whether they are verbal or non-verbal.

**Celebrate Progress:**

Acknowledge and celebrate even small communication milestones and improvements.

Provide positive feedback and encouragement to boost the child's confidence.

**Document and Share:**

Keep a record of the child's progress and communication preferences.

Share insights and observations with the child's parents, caregivers, and other team members to ensure consistency in communication strategies.



1. This is an instructional video on intensive interaction.

2. This video demonstrates how imitation can lead to interaction.



3. This video demonstrates intensive interaction with a sensory avoiding teenager.

4. This video demonstrates how play can be adapted for imitation and interaction.



### **Observe and Imitate Step by Step:**

#### **Begin Observation:**

Sit or kneel at the child's eye level to make it easier for them to see your face and gestures.

Watch the child closely and attentively without making any demands or expectations.

#### **Identify Communication Attempts:**

Pay close attention to the child's non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, body movements, or vocalisations.

Look for patterns or recurring behaviours that may indicate a form of communication.

#### **Imitate the Child's Actions:**

Choose one of the child's actions or sounds that seems meaningful to them.

Imitate this action or sound to create a connection and show that you are engaging with them on their terms.

#### **Mirror Facial Expressions:**

Imitate the child's facial expressions to convey emotional connection and empathy.

For example, if the child smiles, smile back in response.

#### **Maintain Eye Contact:**

Keep gentle eye contact with the child to establish a sense of connection and trust.

Use your eyes to communicate warmth and interest.

### **Repetition and Reinforcement Step by Step:**

#### **Repeat the Child's Communication Attempts:**

Whenever the child initiates an action, sound, or gesture, repeat it immediately.

This repetition validates their communication and helps them understand that you are actively engaged with them.

#### **Vary Your Response:**

After a few repetitions of the child's action, introduce slight variations to keep the interaction engaging.

For instance, if the child taps a toy, you could tap it with a different object or in a different way.

#### **Provide Encouragement:**

Offer positive feedback through your tone of voice and facial expressions.

Use encouraging words like "Great job!" or "You're doing awesome!" to reinforce the child's efforts.

**Expand the Interaction:**

Gradually expand the interaction by building on the child's communication attempts.

For example, if the child claps their hands, you might start clapping together rhythmically.

**Use Preferred Activities or Objects:**

Incorporate activities or objects that the child enjoys to motivate and reinforce their communication.

If the child is interested in a specific toy, use that toy in your interactions.

**Be Patient and Give Space:**

Allow the child to set the pace of the interaction.

If they pause or disengage, respect their need for a break and be ready to re-engage when they're ready.