

Ideas for Helping Campers Communicate

Some campers may have difficulty communicating their wants/needs/ideas due to limited verbal speech and/or poor speech intelligibility or may have difficulty understanding questions or directions. Here's what you can do to help those campers.

1). Offer 2 to 3 choices.

Depending on the level of the child choices could be:

* Verbal (e.g. ask do you want shaving cream or glue?). You may want to show the 2 items when asking.

* Visual (e.g. Show the 2 items or pictures of the items or activities. Ask the child, "do you want ___ or ___?" and let the child choose by pointing or looking at the preferred item/activity).

2). Simplify your language and use visual cues. (e.g. show items or pictures, or use gestures to help kids understand questions or directions for kids who you think may not be understanding you). For example, ask, "crackers or juice?" while showing the items, or say "throw in" while making a throwing motion with your arm then pointing to the container you want the child to throw the item into.

3). Give the child plenty of time to respond by counting to 10 in your head before repeating your question or direction. Some campers may be slow to process information they hear auditorily, or may need time to form an answer and/or coordinate the muscle movements necessary for gesturing or speaking.

4) Get eye contact from the camper during communication. This may mean moving your body that you can be looking at them rather than waiting for them to turn and look at you.

5). Use an animated voice and facial expressions to get the attention of campers who appear to be not listening or who are not focused on your question.

6). Give positive reinforcement for all communication attempts. It's better to repeat what a child said so that they can hear the appropriate speech and language model rather than saying "no" when something they said did not come out clearly. Give verbal praise e.g., "Good choice!" and respond immediately when a child is successful in communicating.