

GIVING CHOICES

Why is giving choices useful?

Giving choices can be a really helpful strategy to help children learn to make requests, and give them a little bit of control over their daily routine. It also gives us the opportunity to model some spoken language, and for the child to link the language with the real object. Finally, waiting while you present the choices can help to develop a child's attention.

How to give choices

It's important to begin by **limiting to 2 choices**. Hold up **real objects**, show them the options and **name each one** as you move it towards the child, for example "apple or banana?", "car or train?".

You may have noticed that if you offer two items to your child, they will take both items every time. Or you might find they do not take either item at all. We can help children to become more consistent at choice making by moving through the following steps



Step 1: Offer two objects, one that your child really likes and one that they are not very interested in. For example, "biscuit or parsnip?", "car or pebble?", "light spinner or glue stick?".



Step 2: Offer two objects that your child really likes. For example, "car or tractor?", "banana or grapes?".

After offering a choice, **pause and wait** to give your child time to respond. Children can indicate their choice using a range of different kinds of communication: they might reach for the object they want, point, vocalise, or even copy the spoken word after you.

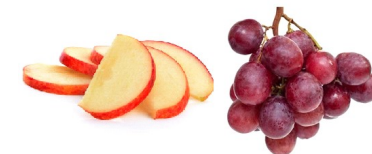
When they indicate a choice, you should **hand them the object** immediately and **repeat the word** to model the vocabulary and help them to link the object with the spoken word: e.g. if they reach for an apple, you say "apple, mmm apple, here's the apple!" as you give it to them.

Good activities for choice making

Some good activities for offering choices include:

- Meals and snack times.
- Using toys with pieces, such as puzzles, Mr Potato Head, pop-up pirate, wooden train tracks.
- Bath time (e.g. "rubber duck or boat?").
- Getting dressed (e.g. offering a choice of two different tops, or a choice of what to put on next such as "t shirt or pants?").
- Story time (e.g. offering choice of 2 books).

With some of these activities, particularly using toys with pieces or offering snacks, you can create lots of extra opportunities for making choices by **holding pieces back**. For example, if you keep hold of all the train track pieces or all of the slices of apple and grapes, then every time your child has finished with the one in their hand, you can offer another piece: "curved or straight track?", "apple or grape?".



What next

Once your child can consistently make a choice from objects, you could progress to offering choices while holding up two photos or symbols, for example "slide or scooter?", "fish fingers or pasta?". Photographs are particularly useful for requesting things that aren't immediately available (such as meals or toys/activities that are in a different place).