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Let's Talk

Communication at its Best



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Welcome to Let's Talk

You are already helping your child communicate

If your child has ever told you every detail of their favourite film, argued passionately that their idea is better, pointed to something they wanted, or asked a question you could not answer—you have already been supporting their communication.

Communication begins long before a child can hold a conversation. It can be found in a look, a gesture, a sound, a movement or an expression. It grows whenever a child discovers that someone is paying attention and wants to understand them.

It happens over breakfast, in the car and while watching a familiar programme together. It happens when children are excited and their words come tumbling out—and when they are struggling to explain how they feel.

Let's Talk contains ten simple activities to help you create more of those moments. You do not need special equipment or formal lessons. Your child can take part by talking, choosing, pointing, signing, drawing, acting, making sounds or using a communication aid. There is no single right way to join in.

The activities will help you:

- begin conversations without putting your child under pressure;
- encourage listening, turn-taking and shared attention;
- support children who need help finding or organising their words;
- notice the learning taking place during ordinary conversations;
- adapt each activity to suit your child.

You know your child best. Follow their interests, give them time and enjoy the moments of connection that grow along the way.

Every attempt to communicate matters
You do not have to teach communication perfectly. By being interested, listening carefully and showing your child that their ideas matter, you are already giving them something enormously valuable:
a reason to communicate and the confidence to keep trying.

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What Your Child Is Building When You Talk Together

Conversation may feel like an ordinary part of family life, but a great deal of learning is taking place. Every time your child communicates with you, they are developing skills that will support their relationships, confidence and learning.

Listening and Turn-Taking

Conversation is a shared exchange. Children learn to notice when someone else is communicating, wait for their opportunity and respond in their own way.

Expressing Ideas

Finding a way to share a thought is a complex skill. Children learn to organise their ideas and communicate them through words, signs, gestures, pictures, sounds or actions.

Vocabulary and Meaning

Children meet new words most naturally when they hear them connected to something meaningful. Talking about real experiences helps new language make sense.

Memory and Sequencing

Remembering what happened and sharing it in order helps children understand beginnings, middles and endings. This supports everyday explanations as well as storytelling.

Imagination and Prediction

Wondering, pretending and guessing what might happen next encourage children to think beyond what they can see and explore new possibilities.

Understanding Feelings

Talking about experiences helps children recognise emotions, understand different points of view and find ways to express what they need.

Confidence and Connection

When children feel listened to, they learn that their ideas matter. This gives them the confidence to contribute, ask questions and keep communicating.

You may not see all these skills at once
One child may tell you a detailed story. Another may make a choice, add a sound, point to a picture or respond with an expression.
Notice the communication—not only the words. Every contribution is part of the learning.

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How to Use This Booklet

Begin wherever it feels right

There is no timetable to follow and no need to complete the activities in order.
Choose an activity that suits your child's interests, energy and mood. You might use it while travelling, during a meal, at bedtime or whenever a natural opportunity appears.
Some activities may become firm favourites. Others might not interest your child today but work beautifully another time. It is fine to pause, adapt an idea or leave it and come back later.

Keep it playful

The activities are invitations, not tests. There are no answers your child must produce and no set amount of talking they need to do.

Be curious, join in and allow the conversation to travel in an unexpected direction. The most valuable moment may not be the one the activity originally set out to create.

Give your child time

Some children need longer to understand a question, organise their thoughts or decide how they want to respond.
Try not to fill every silence. A quiet pause can give your child the time they need to take their turn.

Follow their way of communicating

Your child might talk, point, sign, draw, act, choose between options, use facial expressions or communicate with an aid.
Respond to what they offer and show them that you have noticed. Communication grows when children feel understood.

Look beneath the activity
Each activity includes a little guidance for you:

- **Have a Go** explains what to do.
- **Try This** offers another way to explore the idea.
- **Join In Your Way** helps you adapt the activity.
- **What They're Discovering** reveals the learning underneath.
- **A Note for You** offers reassurance or practical support.

You do not need to use every part. Choose what helps you and your child.
Talk together. Listen to each other. Enjoy the connection.
The learning will grow from there.

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Join In Your Way

Communication does not have to look or sound a particular way

Some children will answer with a full story. Others may offer one word, choose between two ideas, point, sign, draw, act, make a sound or show you something through their expression.
All of these are ways of communicating.
The activities in this booklet can be adapted so that your child can take part in the way that works best for them.

Offer a choice

An open question can sometimes feel too large.
Instead of asking, "What shall we put in our story?" you could ask, "Shall we add a dragon or a dog?"
Choices reduce the pressure while still allowing your child to make a meaningful contribution.

Show them how

If your child is unsure how to begin, take the first turn yourself.
You might say, "I think the character is feeling nervous because the room is dark. What do you think?"
A simple example can make an unfamiliar activity feel safer.

Give them time

Ask the question, then pause.
Some children need extra time to understand what has been asked, find their answer and decide how to communicate it. A quiet pause does not mean that nothing is happening.

Notice every response

A look, movement, sound or change of expression may be your child's answer.
Respond to what you notice: "You smiled when I said dinosaur. Shall we choose the dinosaur?"
This shows your child that their communication has been seen and understood.

Add a little more

You can gently build on what your child gives you.
If they say, "Dog," you might respond, "Yes—a muddy dog!" If they point to a picture, name what they have chosen. You are adding language without correcting or taking over.

Know when to stop

Communication is harder when a child is tired, anxious, overwhelmed or no longer interested.
It is always fine to pause the activity. A short, enjoyable exchange is more valuable than continuing until it feels like a test.

Connection comes first

You are not looking for perfect sentences or a particular answer. You are showing your child that their ideas are worth sharing and that you want to understand them.

When a child feels heard, communication has a reason to grow.

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Activity 1 – The Story Chain

Build a story together, one turn at a time

Have a Go

Choose someone to begin the story with one sentence.

You might start with:

"One morning, a tiny dragon appeared at the window..."
"The door had always been locked, but today it was open..."
"As we walked along the beach, we spotted something shining in the sand..."

The next person adds another sentence. Keep taking turns and allow the story to grow. There is no need to plan where it is going. Welcome surprising ideas, follow unexpected twists and enjoy being a little silly. The fun comes from creating something together.
You can continue until the story reaches an ending—or simply stop when you have had enough.

Try This

Begin with a story your child already knows.

Retell a familiar fairy tale, book, film or nursery rhyme, but invite each person to change or add something during their turn.

- What if the three bears lived on a boat?
- What if Cinderella refused to leave the ball?
- What if the enormous turnip would not come out because something was holding it underground?

A familiar story gives your child a safe starting point while still leaving room for new ideas.

Join In Your Way

Your child does not have to add a complete sentence.

They might:

choose between two possible ideas;
add one word, sound or action;
point to a character or object;
draw what should happen next;
act out their part of the story;
use a picture, symbol or communication aid.

You can turn their contribution into a sentence and add it to the story. The idea still belongs to them.

What They're Discovering

As your child joins the story, they are practising:
listening and taking turns;
remembering what has already happened;
putting events into an order;
using and understanding new vocabulary;
connecting their idea to someone else's;
imagining possibilities and making choices.
They are also discovering that stories can change as people contribute different ideas.

A Note for You

Try not to correct the story or steer it towards a sensible ending. If your child introduces a flying banana, a talking sock or a sudden trip to the Moon, accept it and build on it.

If they need help, offer a choice:
"Should the character open the box or hide it?"
Then wait and give them time to respond.
The aim is not to create a perfect story. It is to enjoy sharing ideas and discovering where those ideas can take you.

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Activity 2 – Tell Me About Your Day

Turn a big question into an easier conversation

Have a Go

Instead of asking, "How was your day?" try asking one small, specific question.

You might ask:

- "What made you laugh today?"
- "What was the easiest part of your day?"
- "Was anything surprising?"
- "What was the best thing you saw?"
- "Was there a moment that felt difficult?"
- "What would you like to do differently tomorrow?"

Choose just one question and give your child time to think.
Share your own answer too. Taking turns makes this feel like a conversation rather than a list of questions your child must answer.

Try This

Invite your child to describe their day in a more imaginative way.

You could ask:

- "If your day was a colour, what colour would it be?"
- "What kind of weather was your day?"
- "If your day was an animal, what would it be?"
- "Did today feel fast, slow, bumpy or smooth?"
- "What title would you give today?"

There is no correct answer. A grey day might mean tired, peaceful, gloomy—or something completely different.

Follow your child's idea by asking, "What made you choose that?"

Join In Your Way

Your child might find it easier to show you rather than tell you.

They could:

- choose between two questions;
- point to a colour, picture or emotion card;
- show a thumbs up, down or somewhere in between;
- draw one moment from their day;
- choose a photograph, object or song that matches how the day felt;
- use gestures, signs, sounds or a communication aid.

You can describe what you notice and check whether you have understood: "You chose the stormy picture. Did something feel difficult today?"

What They're Discovering

- remembering and selecting important moments;
- organising experiences into words or other forms;
- recognising and expressing emotions;
- listening and responding during a conversation;
- making comparisons and using descriptive language;

understanding that different people may experience the same day differently.

A Note for You

Try not to ask too many follow-up questions at once. One thoughtful answer is more valuable than a long conversation your child feels pressured to continue.
If they do not want to talk, you might simply share something from your own day:
"I felt proud when I finished something difficult."
This keeps the door open without demanding a response.
Sometimes children talk immediately. Sometimes they return later, when they have had time to process their day. Both are completely fine.

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Activity 3 – The Describing Game

Give clues without saying the name

Have a Go

One person secretly chooses an object and describes it without saying what it is. Everyone else listens and tries to guess.

You could describe:

- what it looks or feels like;
- where you might find it;
- what it is used for;
- the sound it makes;
- how it moves.

Instead of saying, "It is a cat," you might say, "It has soft fur, it moves quietly and it sometimes purrs."

Take turns choosing and guessing.

Try This

Place three or four familiar objects, toys or pictures where everyone can see them.

Secretly choose one and give a clue:

- "It is round."
- "You can eat it."
- "It is smaller than my hand."

Having visible choices makes the game easier while still encouraging careful listening and describing.

Join In Your Way

Your child might:

- point to the answer;
- choose between two objects;
- touch, hold or examine the objects;
- give one word, sound, gesture or action as a clue;
- draw the object instead of describing it aloud.

Accept whatever clues they can offer and help turn them into fuller descriptions if needed.

What They're Discovering

This game helps your child practise:

- noticing important details;
- choosing useful describing words;
- listening carefully;
- connecting clues;
- asking questions;
- taking turns and solving problems.

A Note for You

Begin with familiar objects and simple clues. As your child grows in confidence, introduce clues that use comparisons:
"It is rough like tree bark."
"It moves as slowly as a sleepy snail."

The aim is not to guess quickly. The thinking, listening and describing are the most valuable parts of the game.

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Activity 4 – What Happens Next?

Pause, wonder and predict together

Have a Go

While sharing a book, watching a familiar film or listening to a story, pause just before something important happens.

Ask:

"What do you think will happen next?"

Let your child offer any idea that makes sense to them. Then continue with the story and discover what really happens.

You might talk about:

- whether their prediction was close;
- which clues helped them;
- what surprised them;
- whether they preferred their own idea;
- what else could have happened.

There is no need to stop often. One well-chosen pause is enough to begin a thoughtful conversation.

Try This

Pause at a moment when a character must make a decision.

Ask:

- "What do you think they will do?"
- "What would you do?"
- "How might that choice change the story?"
- "What could go wrong?"
- "What are you hoping will happen?"

This helps your child think about possibilities, reasons and consequences—not only guess the next event.

Join In Your Way

Your child might:

- choose between two possible outcomes;
- point to a picture or character;
- draw what they think will happen;
- act out their prediction;
- use a word, gesture, sound or communication aid;
- ask you to share your idea first.

If predicting feels difficult, offer a prompt:

"Do you think the character will open the door or walk away?"

What They're Discovering

As your child predicts, they are practising:

- listening and remembering;
- noticing clues and important details;
- connecting one event to another;
- explaining their ideas;
- understanding cause and effect;
- imagining different possibilities.

They are also learning that an idea can be thoughtful and worthwhile even when it does not match what happens next.

A Note for You

Familiar stories are ideal for this activity. Knowing the ending does not remove the learning.

When children already know what will happen, they can think more deeply about the clues, the character's choices and the way the story has been built. They may also enjoy inventing a completely different outcome.

The value is not in predicting correctly. It is in noticing, wondering and explaining an idea.

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Activity 5 – The Nursery Rhyme Game

Pause, play and let your child join in

Have a Go

Choose a familiar nursery rhyme, action song or chant—something your child knows well.

Say or sing it together, but pause before an important or rhyming word:

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a..."

Then wait and see how your child responds.
They might say the missing word, make the action, add a sound, smile because they know what comes next—or look at you as if to say, "Why have you stopped?"

Repeat the rhyme and leave gaps in different places.

Try This

Change one of the words and make it deliberately silly:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little... banana!"

Pause to see whether your child notices. They may correct you, laugh or invent another ridiculous version.

Older children may enjoy changing a complete line, adding a new verse or turning a familiar rhyme into a rap, joke or dramatic performance.

Join In Your Way

Your child might:

- say or sign the missing word;
- point to a matching picture or object;
- clap, tap or move to the rhythm;
- make an action or sound;
- choose between two possible words;
- press a symbol or use a communication aid.

Anticipating the pause and responding in any way is taking part.

What They're Discovering

Rhymes and familiar songs help your child practise:

- listening and shared attention;
- remembering words and patterns;
- hearing rhythm and rhyme;
- predicting what comes next;
- taking turns;
- experimenting with sounds and language.

Repetition also gives children the confidence of knowing what is coming.

A Note for You

Do not rush to fill the gap. Your child may need a little extra time to recognise the pause and prepare their response.
Use expression, actions and changes in volume to keep it playful. Whisper a line, sing another loudly or slow the rhyme down until it sounds wonderfully dramatic.

When children know a rhyme "by heart", they are not merely repeating it. They are using memory, prediction, rhythm and language together.

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Activity 6 – Interview Me

Let your child ask the questions

Have a Go

Tell your child that they are the interviewer and you are their guest. They can ask you anything they would like to know.

They might ask about:

- your childhood;
- your favourite things;
- something funny that happened to you;
- a time you felt proud or frightened;
- what you wanted to be when you grew up;
- something you have always wanted to try.

Answer with interest and a little detail. Your answer may inspire the next question.

Try This

If thinking of questions is difficult, choose a theme together:

When You Were Young
"What games did you play?"
Favourites
"What is your favourite place?"
Imagine If...
"What would you do if you could fly?"
Offer useful question starters:
Who...? What...? Where...? When...? Why...? How...?
Encourage one follow-up question, such as:
"What happened next?"
"How did that make you feel?"
"Why did you choose that?"

What They're Discovering

This activity helps your child practise:

- forming and asking questions;
- listening for important information;
- waiting for an answer;
- thinking of a follow-up question;
- learning about another person's experiences;
- leading a conversation with confidence.

Join In Your Way

Your child could:

- choose from questions you have written down;
- point to a topic or picture;
- complete a question you begin;
- record the interview;
- use gestures, signs or a communication aid;
- ask someone to speak or write their question for them.

They are still the interviewer, however the question is communicated.

A Note for You

Give genuine answers where you can. Children often listen especially carefully when they hear stories about someone they know.
It is also fine to say:
"I would rather not answer that one. Shall we choose another?"
This models respectful boundaries as part of communication.
Resist the temptation to take over and begin interviewing your child. Let them enjoy being in charge.

When a child's question receives a thoughtful answer, they learn that their curiosity—and their voice—matters.

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Activity 7 – The Feeling Check

Explore feelings through stories and characters

Have a Go

After sharing a story, film or programme, choose one moment and ask:

"How do you think the character was feeling?"

Look for clues together:

- What did their face show?
- What did they say?
- How did their voice sound?
- What did their body do?
- Did their behaviour change?

There may be more than one possible answer. Encourage your child to explain what made them choose that feeling.

Try This

Explore whether the character could be feeling two things at once.

You might ask:

- "Could they be excited and nervous?"
- "Might they feel angry because they are frightened?"
- "Could they be pleased but also a little disappointed?"
- "Do you think their feelings changed?"

You could also wonder how another character in the same scene might feel differently.

Join In Your Way

Your child could:

- choose from two emotion words;
- point to an emotion card or picture;
- copy the character's expression;
- act out how the character might move;
- choose a colour to represent the feeling;
- use a gesture, sign, sound or communication aid.

If naming the feeling is difficult, describe what you notice first:

"The character is hiding and speaking very quietly. I wonder how they feel."

What They're Discovering

This activity helps your child practise:

- recognising emotional clues;
- learning words for different feelings;
- understanding another person's point of view;
- noticing that people may respond differently;
- recognising that feelings can change;
- understanding that more than one feeling can exist at once.

A Note for You

You might gently ask:

"Have you ever felt a little like that?"

Your child may make a connection—or they may prefer to keep talking about the character. Both responses are valuable.

Avoid correcting their interpretation too quickly. Ask what they noticed, because their answer may come from a clue you had not considered.

Talking about a fictional feeling can sometimes help a child understand their own experiences without having to discuss them directly.

The aim is not to find the one correct emotion. It is to notice, wonder and build a richer language for feelings.

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Activity 8 – Remember When

Share a memory and rebuild the story together

Have a Go

Choose a memory you and your child share.

It might be:

- a funny family moment;
- a special day or celebration;
- a journey or day out;
- something that went wrong but became funny later;
- an ordinary moment you both enjoyed.

Begin the story yourself:

"Do you remember when…?"

Share one detail, then pause and invite your child to add something.

You might ask:

"What happened next?"

"Who was there?"

"What do you remember most?"

Take turns adding details until you have rebuilt the memory together.

Try This

Use something connected to the memory to help the conversation begin:

- look at a photograph;
- hold an object or souvenir;
- listen to a song;
- smell or taste something familiar;
- revisit a favourite place.

Sensory clues can help memories return. You may suddenly remember what the weather was like, what someone said or how you felt at the time.

Join In Your Way

Your child does not need to retell the whole event.

They might:

- choose the photograph they want to discuss;
- point to someone or something they remember;
- add one word, sound or action;
- draw a moment from the memory;
- put two or three pictures into order;
- use gestures, signs or a communication aid.

You can tell the main story and leave spaces for their contributions.

What They're Discovering

Sharing memories helps your child practise:

- recalling people, places and events;
- putting experiences into an order;
- listening and taking turns;
- adding details to someone else's account;
- using language connected to time;
- recognising that experiences can become stories.

Shared memories also help children understand their place within a family or community.

A Note for You

Two people may remember the same event differently.

One person may remember the rain; another remembers the enormous ice cream.

Avoid treating the activity as a memory test or correcting every small detail.

Instead, try:

"I remember it a little differently. Shall I tell you my version?"

Some memories may bring strong feelings. Follow your child's lead and move to a lighter memory if they seem uncomfortable.

A shared memory does not have to be important or perfectly remembered. The value lies in rebuilding it together.

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Activity 9 – Silly Voices

Discover how a voice can change a character

Have a Go

Choose a familiar story or make up a short scene together.
Give each character a different voice.

You might try:

- a booming giant;
- a tiny, squeaky mouse;
- a slow and sleepy dragon;
- an excitable robot;
- a very serious wizard;
- a superhero who whispers.

Change the volume, speed, pitch or expression of your voice. Take turns choosing how each character should sound.

Try This

Say the same sentence in several different ways:

"I can't believe you did that."

Try saying it as though you are:

- surprised;
- delighted;
- angry;
- worried;
- trying not to laugh.

Talk about what changed. Did the words mean something different when the voice changed?

You could also say a cheerful sentence in a gloomy voice or a serious sentence in a ridiculously excited voice.

Join In Your Way

Your child might:

- choose which voice you should use;
- point to an emotion or character card;
- make a sound instead of saying words;
- use facial expressions or actions;
- move a toy or puppet while you provide the voice;
- record the voices and listen to them afterwards.

Directing the performance is another way to take part.

What They're Discovering

Playing with voices helps your child practise:

- hearing changes in tone, pace and volume;
- recognising emotion in a voice;
- understanding that delivery can change meaning;
- matching a voice to a character;
- listening carefully;
- experimenting with expression and storytelling.

A Note for You

Some children love performing; others may feel uncomfortable or self-conscious.

Begin by doing the voices yourself and allow your child to join when they are ready.

Keep the humour focused on imaginary characters and exaggerated emotions rather than real accents or the way another person speaks.

There is no need for the voice to sound convincing. The more ridiculous it is, the more memorable the activity may become.

Words tell us part of the message. The voice gives us many of the clues we need to understand it.

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Activity 10 – The Question Game

Take turns asking, answering and discovering

Have a Go

Take turns asking each other one question.

You could begin with:

- "What always makes you laugh?"
- "Where would you like to visit?"
- "What are you really good at?"
- "Which three things would you take to a desert island?"
- "What would your perfect day include?"
- "What is something you would like to learn?"

Listen to the answer before swapping roles.

Continue for as long as the conversation feels enjoyable. Three thoughtful questions may be plenty.

Try This

Create a question trail.

Listen carefully to the answer, then use something you heard to form your next question.

For example:

"I would take my guitar to a desert island."
"Why did you choose your guitar?"
"Because music helps me feel calm."
"What kind of music do you like playing?"

Notice how one answer can open the door to another question and carry the conversation somewhere unexpected.

Join In Your Way

Your child could:

- choose from questions written on cards;
- select a topic such as animals, food, family or imagination;
- point to the question they want you to answer;
- choose between two possible questions;
- complete a question starter;
- use gestures, signs or a communication aid.

You can read the question aloud while your child remains the person asking it.

What They're Discovering

This game helps your child practise:

- asking and answering questions;
- listening for useful information;
- waiting and taking turns;
- following a conversational thread;
- showing curiosity about another person;
- sharing preferences, ideas and experiences;
- recognising when someone wishes to pass.

A Note for You

Answer with enough detail to give your child something interesting to respond to, but keep the exchange natural.

Either person may say:

"I would rather not answer that one. May I have another question?"

This shows that conversations can be open and honest while still respecting personal boundaries.

If your child gives a very short answer, resist asking several questions at once. Share your own answer, offer a choice or allow the conversation to move on.

A good conversation is not measured by how long it lasts. It grows when two people feel heard, respected and interested in one another.

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Keep Talking. Keep Listening. Keep Connecting.

There is no perfect way to use this booklet.

Some activities may lead to wonderful conversations. Others might receive a shrug, a giggle or no response at all. That is completely fine. Children are not always ready to communicate when we expect them to be—and neither are adults.

What matters is that you made space for your child's ideas.
Every time you listen with interest, wait for their response or show them that their way of communicating counts, you help build confidence and connection.

Return to these activities whenever you need them. Pull out a favourite page for a car journey, a quiet afternoon or one of those moments when you simply want something enjoyable to do together.

You do not need to be a communication expert.
You only need to be interested in what your child has to share.

Keep talking. Keep listening. Keep going. 💙

Continue the Communication Journey

Let's Talk is the beginning of the Why Play Learning Communication Collection—resources designed to help children communicate, imagine, listen and share their ideas in many different ways.

Tell Me More
Take conversation a little further with activities exploring meaningful questions, storytelling, listening, imaginative play and discussing the world.

I Can Show You
Explore visual communication and discover how photographs, films, images and media can tell stories and shape meaning.

Lights, Camera, Me!
Help your child plan, create and share short videos while developing confidence, creativity and their own storytelling voice.

They're Learning, I Promise
A supportive journal for parents and carers, helping you notice the communication, confidence and learning growing through everyday moments.

Every child has something worth communicating.
Sometimes we simply need to notice how they are sharing it.
Explore the Communication Collection at:
www.whyplaylearning.com

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