



Purposeful Pausing



Pausing is one of the techniques used in spoken language learning for a child with hearing loss. It can be used initially to encourage response to sounds, later for language development and then for problem solving. Pausing involves waiting to see if your child responds before you prompt him or model the expected answer. Once a child is wearing his listening devices during all waking hours, pausing can give him developmentally appropriate opportunities to show what he notices and understands.

Pausing for Response To Sounds

A spoken language approach starts with building awareness of sound and strengthening a child's listening skills. Then parents can use pausing to encourage their child's listening responses.

If you have consistently pointed out a sound such as a ringing phone, begin to wait after it rings. Is your child able to hear the sound and then locate the sound source? If he requires help after 3-6 seconds, show him the sound source so he can make the connection between the sound and the object.

Pausing for Receptive Language

(The language your child understands)

When a child has much practice listening to sounds and words, he should be given reasons to respond to spoken language in meaningful ways. You can surround your child with language by narrating activities, conversing during play, describing daily routines, reading, singing and talking constantly.

To allow your child to show what he hears and understands, you could make a statement without any gestures such as, "Your backpack is unzipped." This provides auditory information only. Wait for 3 or more seconds so your child has time to process what you said. If he does not look at his backpack, then add visual information by pointing and saying, "Look at your backpack. It is unzipped." Whether he responds to auditory only or both auditory and visual input, after he looks at the backpack you can expand on what you said and talk about what goes in the backpack or what will happen if he does not zip it.

Pausing for Expressive Language

(The language your child uses)

Once your child has receptive spoken language skills the goal is for him to use his voice. The pausing technique can be used to teach your child beginning conversational skills and turn-taking.

If your child is a relatively "new" listener, pausing can be used to encourage vocalizing during play. When playing ball, try saying, "One, two, three...GO!" before rolling the ball. Initially just play and let your child hear your voice over and over. Then start to pause after you

say the word “three” before rolling the ball back to your child. Wait 3-5 seconds to see if your child will vocalize or say “GO!” to indicate his desire for you to return the ball. When you pause, your child may use the opportunity to use gestures, vocalize or verbalize.

Once he is saying some words, you can offer him choices by setting out two items and asking a question. First, without pointing, ask him, “Do you want the bike or the wagon?” and wait. If he points to his choice or attempts to name an item, provide him with the language. “Bike. You want to pedal the bike.” Pausing can be used frequently as a child’s spoken language increases to encourage him to use more words. You may start a sentence and then pause for your child to add some of the words. For example, you might say, “I have some...” and wait for your child to say, “cookies!”

Pausing for Problem Solving

Listening, language and speech skills improve over time. You do not want to frustrate your child but you want to provide opportunities for him to demonstrate his spontaneous language and thinking skills. You might say “We could make pudding for lunch. What do we need?” Wait to see if your child mentions any utensils or ingredients. If he mentions milk or a bowl, encourage him to tell you how to make it. If he does not answer, add more information. “I will get the pudding box. What can you get?” Respect your child’s pace and follow his lead.

Pausing can be used for different levels of listening, language and speech. Work closely with your child’s service providers to identify when it will be helpful to use this method to elicit more responses from your child. Pausing should be done purposefully and patiently. Pause also to delight in all the progress your child is making.