

Offering Choices



An extension of the withholding strategy – continue to withhold the desired item but this time, pair it with another item.

If you ask your child if he wants something, chances are he'll either reach for it or turn away. If he says, "yes" or "no", that's great. But we can get even more from these opportunities by presenting two distinct choices.

By asking, "Play car or truck?" (and PAUSING) we are not only providing a natural opportunity to practice the word, but we're also teaching how to communicate preferences. *Children learn that communication gives them choices and control, which leads to more communication attempts.*

How to do it:

Stage 1:

- To start, make sure you chose a highly desired item and pair it with a non-desirable item eg: "Play ball or play socks?" This helps your child understand the concept of choice making. Tip: Offer non-preferred item last as your child may just imitate the last item heard).
- If your child picks the socks, give him the socks. PAUSE. Try to avoid correcting him. Wait for him to see the mistake he made. When he reaches for the preferred thing or show upset, MODEL "Oh you want

ball - NOT socks!" Then give ball. This is a good opportunity to model the concept of "NOT!"



- As soon as your child indicates a choice, even if she doesn't have the word quite yet, give it to her immediately and model the word " Ball? – OK, here's ball!"- This is important because we're not just teaching the word, we're teaching how to communicate choice.

Stage 2:

- Once she gets the hang of making simple choices we can introduce choices between 2 preferred or related things. Eg. " sit down or stand up?"
- Build in choice opportunities throughout the day eg. Getting dressed, eating, walking eg: "Walk fast or slow?"
- Aim for 5-10 choices a day!
- Try to combine VERB + CHOICE or DESCRIPTOR + CHOICE: eg: "Wear crocs or trainers?" , " Eat blueberries or strawberries?" , "Swing high or low?" rather than just "crocs or trainers/ high or low" etc?
- We can follow up one choice with more choices "Play car? Ok! Big or little car?" or " Play ball? Ok, kick ball or throw ball?"

TIP: Try to avoid "this one" or "that one" since children can quickly learn to substitute all words for "this" and "that!"

