

Intensive Interaction

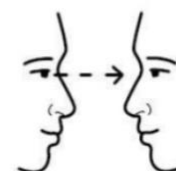
Intensive interaction is an approach used by staff at school. The approach is particularly useful for students who find it difficult to pay attention to an activity led by an adult. In intensive interaction, the child/ young person is **the leader**. This approach was developed by teachers David Hewitt and Melanie Hind. For more information and examples visit <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/> (have a look to see videos)

Intensive Interaction is highly practical and the only equipment needed is you and your child/ young person. It can happen at any time during the day and anywhere (e.g. in the park, playground, or garden). Be sensitive to your child as a communication partner and to understand that communication is about much more than talking – it can take the form of looking, touching, pointing/using gestures, facial expression and lots more.

What does it develop?

It supports the development of essential skills that are needed for communication (also known as the ‘fundamentals of communication’), such as:

- **Attention and listening:** Learning to give and extend attention to another person.
- **Share enjoyment:** To have fun and to play
- **Increasing awareness of others:** Sharing space and becoming aware of people’s vocalisations, actions and initiations.
- **Taking turns:** exchanges of behaviour
- **Responding to verbal and non-verbal communication:** eye contact, facial expressions, gesture and body language.
- **Initiating communication :** Using non-verbal communication to start an interaction with another person



How do I use ‘Intensive Interaction’ with my child?

What do I need to do?	Carefully watch what your child enjoys and what they do when they are playing and copy them
How will I know what they are enjoying if they can’t tell me?	Look out for ALL the signals from your child – facial expression, body language, gestures, movement, noises, vocalisations (attempts to communicate)
What else do I need to do?	Let your child lead and feel in control – follow their lead and try not to direct their play/show them what to do – remember there is no ‘right’/‘wrong’ way to play and following what your child is interested in means they are more likely to stay with the activity for longer.
What next?	Start to extend the range of your play by introducing new toys or actions from time to time. Give space for the child to just notice initially. If they want to take over play with the toy, let them and copy movements and sounds they make. It is useful to have two of the same toy/object so that you can mirror what they do with the toy and perhaps then add some new ideas yourself with the duplicate.

The key responses are:

Responding

- Respond to things the child does. Some ways of responding include:
 - Copying the child, or joining in with what they are doing
This could include: repeating a vocalization, a movement like pacing, or an action like clapping.
 - Using a delighted face/voice/body language to make it fun
 - Adding simple speech. For example, the adult giving a commentary on what the child is doing, 'jumping.'
 - To respond effectively, the adult needs to be able to 'tune-in' to the child. Watch the child: what are they doing? What are they interested in? How could I build communication into what they are doing?



Pauses

- The activity should also contain lot of pauses. It can be difficult for adults to get the balance right, between joining in with the child and not taking over. By giving regular pauses, you are letting the child take a turn. The child will begin to understand that for communication moments to be fun both of you need to join in.

Repetition

- Repetition is key to making progress.
- Repetition will also give the familiarity, predictability, security, and a sense of control and structure.
- Gradually, you will develop a larger and larger range of familiar activities you can do with the child and in a range of contexts. This will help the child to become more confident and experienced in interacting.

Other Tips

- Be aware of signals that the individual wants some space or 'time-out' from interacting with you. If they seem to want to stop, stop for the time being or end the session completely.
- Be aware if the person is becoming too aroused or excited by the interaction: if they do, help them calm down.
- Enjoy it and celebrate shared enjoyment with the other person
- Actions that can/can't be copied. Remember safety.

Tips for home

We respond to:	We respond by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movements/actions • Facial expressions • Body Language • Any communication • The child's interests and pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copying (with enjoyment) • Make yourself available – this means being there, ready, anticipating what the child is going to do. • Being dramatic! You will be more interesting to your child • Use non-verbal communication, e.g. wide eyes.

If you have any questions regarding Intensive Interaction: Speak with your child/young person's Speech and Language Therapist or Class Teacher and they can support you on best practice and general advice.