

# A Guide to Parents about Gesture

## What are gestures?

Gestures are actions used for the purpose of communication and are often expressed using the fingers, hands and arms as well as through facial expressions and body language.



## Why are gestures important?

- They are a useful communication tool that can be used at home, pre-school and out and about
- Gestures allow us to express information to others. This ability to communicate can reduce the frustration experienced by child who find verbal communication difficult
- Gestures allow us to respond to information we might find difficult to understand
- Gestures can support speech and language development
- Gestures can help a child develop their joint attention skills (the ability for 2 people to have attention on the same object).

## Types of gesture

- |                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| ➤ Waving                         | ➤ Pointing       |
| ➤ Shaking head to indicate no    | ➤ Clapping       |
| ➤ Nodding head to indicate yes   | ➤ Blowing kisses |
| ➤ Reaching up/raising their arms | ➤ Thumbs up      |

## Activities to try to support gesture use

Make gestures part of your everyday interactions with your child. The more they are used, the more familiar they will become to you and your child.

**Copy:** When your child uses a gesture, copy it and add in an appropriate word or phrase. For example, if they wave to say goodbye to daddy, wave too and say 'bye daddy'

**Show:** If your child uses a word/phrase attach a relevant gesture to it. For example, if they say the 'ball', repeat the word and hold your hands in the shape of the ball. This will show your child that words and gestures should be used at the same time.

**Nursery rhymes/songs:** Introduce gestures to nursery rhymes or songs your child already knows, or try something new. Encourage your child to join in with the actions, pausing to allow them to do the actions on their own.

**Choices:** Give your child 2 choices e.g. food, toy, book etc. Point to each option and ask which they would like. Encourage your child to point to their choice and name it, if they can.