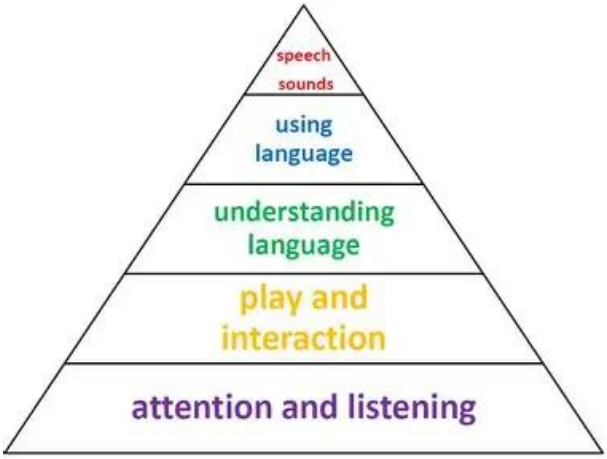
Anticipation Games

In a Nutshell

What are Anticipation games?

Anticipation games are structured activities that support children in developing the ability to predict what comes next. By following a consistent and repetitive format, these games foster engagement and build confidence. The predictable nature of the activity allows children to participate more actively, reinforcing learning through anticipation and enjoyment.





Why use Anticipation games?

Anticipation games provide meaningful opportunities for children with SEND to build essential developmental skills.

- They promote communication by encouraging joint attention with an adult.
- They introduce turn-taking in a playful and accessible way.
- They support cognitive development by helping children learn to predict outcomes through repetition.
- They promote language development by enabling children to hear, learn, and use key words and phrases.
- They foster problem-solving skills by reinforcing the principle of cause and effect.
- Fundamentally anticipation games support the development of attention and listening skills which is foundation for learning and effective communication.

Anticipation Games

In a Nutshell

How to use anticipation games in practice:
To be effective, anticipation games should follow a clear structure with a defined beginning, middle, and end—this helps children learn to predict what comes next.
Adults play a key role in building excitement and engagement by using consistent verbal cues such as “Ready, steady… go!” and incorporating purposeful pauses. These pauses give children time to respond in their own way—whether that’s a glance, a smile, a vocalisation, or a physical gesture like pushing a hand.
Keeping the games simple, fun, and aligned with the child’s interests is essential. This ensures the activity remains motivating and accessible, while also supporting key developmental outcomes.



Examples of games:
- Knocking down a tower of bricks.
- Whooshing cars down ramps/slides
- A game of blowing bubbles
- Having a race
- Playing on a swing in the garden
- Rolling/kicking a ball
- Marble runs
- Pop up toys
- Rocket toys that fly into the sky
- Spinning toys
- Light up/musical toy

Further information and support:
Anticipation Games to support Communication for children with Down syndrome: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpzmyx86bso
Speech and Language Therapy: speech and language therapy, speech, language, Children's speech and language therapy, speech therapy, SALT, SLT | Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust
Speech and Language fact sheet: hct-anticipating-what-will-happendocx.docx
Early Years SEND Team and Advice line: https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/early-years-0-5/early-years-send-specialists.aspx