

Descriptive Commentary

'Descriptive Commentary' is a different way of interacting with a child at play. It makes no demands on the child to perform to the adult's agenda. It simply provides a gentle running commentary on what the child is doing and what is happening.

How to provide Descriptive Commentary

- Begin by '**following the child's lead**'. This means allowing the child to choose how to play, using their own ideas. Avoid asking questions or giving directions.
- **Observe** the child closely so that you can see the focus of their attention, what they are interested in and what they are doing.
- **Describe** what you see
- Your **commentary** needs to be suited to the child's stage of language development; a child who is at an early stage of development will need a more simplified description.
- Keep your language simple and repetitive
- Talk about what your child is doing as they are doing it. For example, 'bread...cutting the bread.....mmmm.....eating bread'
- It is important to **pause** and allow silences in between your comments. This provides spaces in which children can **copy** comments or may initiate some communication, e.g. look, smile, sound, gesture or offer their own comment.
- **Respond** warmly and positively to all attempts to communicate with you.

How is Descriptive Commentary Useful?

Supports Language Development

- Use of descriptive commentary, in place of questions/directions, helps take the pressure off children who very often lack confidence in their ability to give answers or use words
- Children hear words, sounds or phrases that link with what they are doing, are thinking about and are interested in. This helps them listen and to extend the vocabulary of words they understand and can use.

Longer attention span

- Children who 'flit' tend to stay at activities for longer when an adult pays this kind of attention to their play.

Behaviour

- This type of positive attention, without pressure to perform, helps children to feel valued by adults and, over time helps to increase self-esteem.

When to use?

- Descriptive commentary is helpful to all young children, whether at home or in a setting.
- It can be used throughout the day for varied amounts of time. You can slip easily in and out of providing descriptive commentary.