

# Activities to Encourage Your Child to Imitate You

Adapted from: *An early start for your child with Autism*. Rogers, S.J., Dawson, G., Vismara, L.A. (2012)

## 1. Imitating sounds

Encourage your child to continue making sounds and engage in back-and-forth sound games.

- ✓ Get face-to-face with your child
- ✓ Imitate your child's sounds.
- ✓ Pause to see if your child repeats the sound. If she does, imitate again to create a back-and-forth imitation game
- ✓ Sing familiar songs and rhymes over and over
- ✓ Once your child knows a song well, pause before a favorite part to see if your child will fill in the blank

## 2. Imitating actions on objects

- ✓ Use matching sets of objects to play with your child so that you both have the same objects
- ✓ Get face-to-face with your child and imitate exactly what he does with the objects
- ✓ Once he enjoys this game, try showing him a different action with the object. Pause expectantly to see if he will imitate. If he doesn't gently help him to.
- ✓ Praise your child for imitating your action, whether or not you helped. Go back to imitating his choice of actions for a while before trying again.
- ✓ Keep it fun! Add silly sound effects and label the actions as you go.

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### 3. Imitating facial expressions and gestures

- ✓ Pick a gesture in a favorite song. When it gets to that part of the song, begin the gesture, then help your child to imitate by moving her hands. Reward her by continuing the song.
- ✓ Each time give your child less and less help so she is doing it more independently. Don't worry if she doesn't do it exactly. Give lots of praise and encouragement!
- ✓ Use exaggerated facial expressions when playing with your child and in all your daily routines together.
- ✓ Try playing in front of a mirror together and making silly faces and sounds.

### 4. Expand on imitation

- ✓ Strengthen imitation skills in familiar games with familiar objects, using easy and fun new actions.
- ✓ Use turn-taking imitation games when you introduce new play materials to your child.
- ✓ Continue to imitate your child as well so that you both have a turn to 'lead'.
- ✓ Incorporate imitation games across your daily routines - for example during mealtimes, diaper changes, dressing and bathing.