



# STARS – Strategies Tips and Resources for Schools

## Intensive Interaction

**STARS** is a resource created to save you time and includes strategies, tips, methods and practical advice for supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This resource provides adaptable advice for both Primary and Secondary settings, catering to the needs of your school and students.

### What is Intensive Interaction?

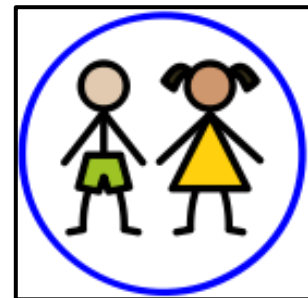
Intensive Interaction is an approach that was developed by David Hewett in the 1980's. It intends to develop a child's early communication and social skills. It also helps to support the development of positive relationships and increase a child's attention. Intensive interaction works on the 'fundamentals of communication' such as: eye contact, facial expressions, vocalisations, gestures, and turn taking.

Intensive Interaction is a two-way communication and can be used at any time in any environment. It helps a child to have fun on their terms with an interested adult. Intensive Interaction is about the adult observing the child's response to different actions through movement, eye gaze, vocalisations and then following their lead and responding.

### Who is Intensive Interaction for?

It is beneficial for all children, but it may be recommended if:

- Your child isn't yet showing awareness of those around them.
- Your child isn't yet responding to interactions.
- Your child isn't yet initiating interactions.
- Your child isn't engaging in a range of play.



### What does Intensive Interaction do?

Intensive Interactions teaches and builds the fundamentals of communication including:

- Learning to give attention to another person (briefly and eventually sustained).
- To share attention with another person.
- To have fun and play.
- Develops early turn taking skills.



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- To use and understand non-verbal forms of communications.
- To use and understand eye-contact and facial expressions.
- It helps children to initiate interactions and communicate with someone else.
- Encourages a child to develop play skills with another person.

### How does Intensive Interaction Work?

- It focuses on the person you are supporting.
- Intensive Interaction can be done anywhere and anytime - a distraction free environment may initially be best.
- Everything the child does should be treated as if it is communication.
- Follow what the child does and do the same, e.g., if they are sitting tapping a box, you would sit alongside them and tap the box or a replica box.
- You imitate the noises they make.
- Develop anticipation and turn taking by pausing and waiting for a response.
- It builds on the child's interactions.
- Follow their lead by observing and responding to body language.
- Come down to the child's level and be responsive.
- You don't need any resources or toys to implement this approach.
- Have fun!



You can only do this if they are ready and there is no pressure on the child. If you don't feel you gained much communication this time, try again another time.

### The 7 Stages of Interaction

- Stage 1 **Encounter**: The child or young person **shows no recognition** of the social opportunity offered by the adult but **allows them nearby**.
- Stage 2 **Awareness**: The child or young person **shows some awareness** of the adult being near them. This awareness may look like a fleeting look or sideways glance. Other responses can be used too e.g., body language cues like reaching out, turning of the head or other actions that are fleeting but intentionally towards the adult.
- Stage 3 **Attend and Respond**: The child or young person will **look at the adult for 1-3 seconds** during their play. They show clear but only brief interest in the social interaction. Eye contact, smiling, reaching out offering something, moving towards the adult, or signing for something are good indicators.



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- Stage 4 **Engagement**: The child or young person will **look at the adult for 3 or more seconds**. This may involve a series of responses compared to a single response in the previous stage.
- Stage 5 **Participation**: The child or young person will **consecutively take turns with an adult**. Ensure that the child or young person is waiting for the adult to take their turn and anticipates their actions.
- Stage 6 **Involvement**: The child or young person will **prompt the adult to restart the interaction** when the adult pauses. For example, the child or young person is briefly distracted during an Intensive Interaction episode and then re-engages as the adult is still present and available.
- Stage 7 **Initiation**: The child or young person will **independently initiate the interaction** with an adult. The adult no longer needs to make themselves available to the child or young person, they now have the skills to independently approach them and initiate the interaction.

### **More Information:**

[Intensive Interaction - Fundamentals of Communication](#)

[Autism - how does Intensive Interaction help people with ASD? - YouTube](#)

[Intensive Interaction - Sense](#)