Six Steps to Follow the Child's Lead

1. Observe, Wait and Listen (OWL)

Observe   for what the child is interested in

Wait   to give the child a chance to initiate or get involved in an activity

Waiting can be hard to do! Try:
• counting to 10
• looking expectant and leaning forward

Listen   to what the child is trying to tell you

Once the child initiates, respond with interest and enthusiasm. Then wait again for him to respond!

Think of a child you find difficult to interact with.

In what situations could you try to OWL?

How do you think this child would respond if you sat back and OWLed?

How will you remember to wait?

2. Be Face to Face

Get down to the child's physical level. Make sure you're face to face so you can look directly into each other's eyes. Being face to face brings you physically and emotionally closer to your child and makes your child feel that you're really with him.

Think of a few ways you can position yourself to be face to face with your child.

6. Join In and Play

When children are playing, the best way to follow their lead is to join in, especially if you act like a kid yourself!

List a few games or activities your child enjoys. How could you join in and play?

REMEMBER! Use *Imitate*, *Interpret*, *Comment* and *Join In and Play* in various combinations throughout an interaction. Think of them as items on a buffet: pick, choose and combine as necessary.

Help a Child Take the Lead — Give a Reason to Communicate and Then Wait

Sometimes, observing, waiting and listening to a child aren't enough to encourage him to initiate, especially if the child has a non-sociable conversational style. You may need to give the child a reason to communicate by setting up the situation, waiting for him to initiate and then setting up the situation again to see if you can get more initiations.

A child in my classroom who rarely initiates is:

Strategies I could use	When I could try this	What I could do
❑ Place something you know the child likes out of reach		
❑ Introduce hard-to-operate toys		
❑ Do the unexpected		
❑ Offer things bit by bit		
❑ Offer choices		