**Intensive Interaction**

Intensive interaction aims to enhance social interaction and communication skills for people who are still at the early stages of communication development.

This may be a person who is very ‘difficult to reach’, living a socially isolated life, perhaps having a range of self-stimulatory behaviours and not showing motivation to be with other people. This might include people who have severe and complex learning difficulties, people who have multi-sensory impairments and people who have a diagnosis of autism. (2016 Intensive Interaction Institute).

The child or young person guides the interactions, and through imitation you begin a conversation with the child in a language that they understand.

**How to do it?**

This practical and playful approach is based on the type of interactions that parents and caregivers have with young children before they start to talk – responding to and copying any noises, movements and actions that a child makes.

There are no set rules or guidelines when carrying out intensive interaction. The aim is for the practitioner is to get into the individuals world and learn more about how the child communicates through observation and imitation.

- The teacher adopts a relaxed, non-directive, responsive approach.
- Provide an environment that is **calm and safe** for the student and have a small range of activities that the student enjoys.
- Position yourself at the same level as the student.
- Use an open body posture, that is, facing the student directly with arms and legs relaxed and not crossing your body.
- **Observe** the student closely, carefully watching their movement, eye gaze and facial expression and listening to the sounds that they make.
- **Follow the student’s lead**, that is, become interested in what they are interested in. Remember you have **no plans or tasks** for the student to do during the session.
- Through imitating, the practitioner joins in with the child’s actions and responses by playfully repeating them
• Treat the things the person does as if this is communication. We read social meaning into actions even when this meaning isn’t yet clear (BILD).

• **Respond to every communication attempt** by the student, including touching, vocalising, looking and movement, in the way that the student wants you to. Copy what the student does and says, that may include manipulation of objects, rocking and vocalisations. It is ok to be silent but present with the student.

• Allow the student to set the pace of the session; it is ok for the student to lose interest in activities quickly or to take a long time to choose an activity.

• The sessions are aimed at **giving the student a sense of control and power** in a communication environment. Above all, the sessions are to create a positive and enjoyable communication environment for the student and their communication partner.

So approach the session with a calm, positive and accepting attitude and have fun!!

Please follow these links for more information:

[Intensive Interaction](#)

[Dave Hewett](#)

**Session Structure**

Intensive interaction involves the practitioner trying to be as, or more interesting than the behaviours that the child enjoys.

For example: if a child likes to flap paper close to their ears, the practitioner may flap paper by the child’s ears. Once you have a child’s attention you could add a sound or additional action and pause long enough to assess the child’s interest. The child may repeat the sound or action back to you showing that they are engaging in a conversation with you that can understand.

By responding to the child in this way, instead of leading, no demands are made on the child and they are in control of the ‘conversation’. We are showing them that we value them and enjoy being with them.

**Example of session structure:**
Recording

Recording any progress form the sessions can present difficulties. It is useful to focus the recording on the child’s involvement; a hierarchy of involvement levels is a good way of marking a child’s progress –

**Encounter:** The student or client is present during an interactive episode, but without any obvious awareness of its progression: *e.g. a willingness to tolerate a shared social atmosphere is sufficient*

**Awareness:** The student or client appears to notice, or fleetingly focus on an event or person involved in the interactive episode *e.g. by briefly interrupting a pattern of self absorbed behaviour, movement or vocalisation*

**Attention and Response:** The student or client begins to respond (although not consistently) to what is happening in an interactive episode *e.g. by showing signs of surprise, enjoyment, frustration or dissatisfaction.*

**Engagement:** The student or client shows consistent attention to an interactive episode presented to them: *e.g. by sustained looking or listening, or repeatedly following events with movements of their eyes, head or other body parts*

**Participation:** The student or client engages in sharing or taking turns in a sequence of events during an interactive episode: *e.g. by sequencing their actions with another person, or by passing signals repeatedly back and forth.*
**Involvement:** The student or client makes active efforts to reach out, consistently join in, or even comment in some way on the interaction: *e.g.* by sequencing their actions **and** signing, vocalising or gesturing in some consistent and meaningful way.

**Student/client Initiated Interaction:** The student or client independently starts an activity (that cannot be described as repetitive or self-absorbed behaviour) and engages another person in the activity with social intent.

>(Firth 2004)

Child’s name:
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<th>Date:</th>
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<th>venue:</th>
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- **Encounter**
- **Awareness**
- **Attention & Response**
- **Engagement**
- **Participation**
- **Involvement**

**Brief Description**

**Pupil initiated interactions**

**Reason for ending session:** pupil non-responsive / avoided / rejected / time [please circle]
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**Encounter**

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