

What Is It?

An opportunity to respond (OTR) is a universal strategy that elicits a child's response by posing questions or comments that provide multiple occasions to answer (Cuticelli et al., 2016). Adults can provide OTRs to children individually or in groups. OTRs keep children engaged. They give adults an opportunity to assess children's learning, check children's understanding, and provide immediate feedback to children. By providing multiple ways to respond (e.g., verbal responses, movements, partner games, using materials), adults can keep children engaged and interested during group or individual activities.

When to Use It

- To promote participation and engagement in routines and activities.
- To provide ways to participate in group activities.
- To teach specific behaviors to individual children or groups of children.
- To check for understanding.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Identify what is being taught (i.e., the goal of the activity or lesson).
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Choose how children will respond to questions or participate in activities (e.g., thumbs up, verbally, moving their bodies, using a prop).
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Determine whether children will respond individually or in groups.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Teach or model how to respond (e.g., "Everyone show me your pointer finger. When I say a word, use your pointer finger to show me where it is in the room").
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Pose a question or direction related to the activity or lesson.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Acknowledge and reinforce participation and responses. Give children an opportunity to correct any errors or misunderstandings (e.g., "This is the letter T. Point to T. Right!").

Example

Wren leads a playgroup of 3 year olds. During large group time, Wren frequently provides many ways for children to engage actively through singing, dancing, and answering questions. This has greatly reduced the amount of time children spend waiting during group time, and it has reduced challenging behaviors. Wren begins by welcoming children to group with a song. The children sing along and greet their peers during the song by turning and giving high fives or waves. Next, Wren discusses the "Question of the Day" with the children. At the beginning of the year, Wren went around the circle and asked each child to respond. This took a great deal of time and children seemed bored. Now, each child responds to the question individually as part of the arrival routine: A Question of the Day chart is displayed in the classroom and children check in by voting, writing their name, or drawing a picture. An adult stays near the board to support children and have warm discussions about the question. At group time, Wren shares the group responses and encourages children to participate with directions like, "If you voted for a goldfish, make a fishy-face," or "How many children have a Y in their names? Show me with your fingers!" Next, Wren reads a story to the children. Some days Wren gives each child a picture card that matches elements of the story. They bring it up and add it to a storyboard when they hear that action in the book. Other days Wren invites children to act out the motions they hear in the story or use their faces to show the emotions they suspect characters are feeling. The group time ends with each child making a play plan for the upcoming free choice time. Wren describes the open interest areas and activities available to the children. Children turn to a peer buddy/neighbor and describe their play plan.

Wren has noticed that Jacobi usually sits and watches during group time. He rarely follows along with movements or responds with the group. Wren decides to experiment with increasing Jacobi's OTRs throughout group time and offering a range of ways for Jacobi to respond. Instead of offering Jacobi picture cards during the story book reading, Wren offers Jacobi and a peer a copy of the book. They follow along and point to pictures together as Wren reads aloud. Wren builds in more opportunities for group responding to questions (e.g., "On the count of three, everyone tell me what animal is in the barn!" or "When I tap on the box, say what you think is inside").

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Include opportunities for children to make corrections. Continue to provide feedback for both correct and incorrect answers.
- Ask all children to respond to questions; this increases OTRs for everyone.
- Allow children time to process information (i.e., provide appropriate wait time).
- Provide positive descriptive feedback for child responses to encourage and promote engagement.

Resources

Haydon, T., MacSuga-Gage, A. S., Simonsen, B., & Hawkins, R. (2012). [Opportunities to respond: A key component of effective instruction](#). *Beyond Behavior*, 22, 23-31.

Katzenbach, J. B., Shuster, B. C., Shafer, B. H., Lloyd, B. P., & Carter, E. W. (n.d.) [Opportunities to respond tip sheet](#). Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at Vanderbilt University.