

# SABOTAGE

A Listening and Spoken Language Strategy

## WHAT is it?

“Sabotage” is doing things wrong on purpose or creating silly situations to get a reaction from your child.

### WHY do we use it?

Using *sabotage* can encourage a child tell you what you did is wrong or request something that is missing. It can also increase learning and receptive vocabulary.

### WHEN do we use it?

*Sabotage* can be used with most toddlers and young children and in a variety of activities during the day. It is supposed to be kind of silly, but it can be frustrating to the child if used too often.

## HOW do we do it?

There are a lot of different ways

Be creative and make it fun!

Give them the wrong thing when they ask.

Make an obviously incorrect statement.

“Forget” to give them something they need.

**Who**  
can use it?

Anyone!

Parents, family members, teachers, and therapists can all use LSL strategies to support your child’s listening and spoken language development!



## WHAT does it look like at home?

### At dinner:

**Child:** “I need a spoon please”

**Parent:** \*Hands the child a fork\* “Here you go.”

**Child:** “What? That’s a fork. I need a spoon.”

**Parent:** “Oh! You are so smart! That is a fork. Here is a spoon.”

### Child and parent playing at the playground:

**Parent:** “Let’s go play on the swings!” \*Walks over to the slide\*

**Child:** “No! That is the slide!”

**Parent:** “Oh, you’re right! Where are the swings?”

### Setting up for a painting craft:

\*Gives the child paper and a paint brush but no paint\*

**Parent:** “Ok, here is everything you need. “  
\*pause and look expectantly at child\*

**Child:** “You didn’t give me any paint!”

**Parent:** “Silly me! I forgot the paint!”

### References:

- Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C.E., (1994). Surprising, magical and miraculous turns of events: Children’s reactions to violations of their early theories of mind and matter. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 12(1), 83-95.
- Markman, E. M. (1977). Realizing that you don’t understand: a preliminary investigation. *Child Development*, 48986-992.
- Mather, E., & Plunkett, K. (2012). The role of novelty in early word learning. *Cognitive Science*, 36(7), 1157-1177. doi:10.1111/j.1551-6709.2012.01239.x
- Ostrosky, M.M., Kaiser, A.P., (1991). Preschool classrooms environments that promote communication. *Teaching Exceptional Children*. Summer 1991, 6-10.
- Stahl, A. a., & Feigenson, L. (2015). Observing the unexpected enhances infants’ learning and exploration. *Science*, 348(6230), 91-94. doi:10.1126/science.aaa3799

Special thanks to graduate students in the Listening and Spoken Language Deaf Education graduate training program at Utah State University. These pages can be reproduced for educational purposes.

©Utah State University, Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education