

## Supporting Echolalia

### Echolalia is...

**When a person repeats words or phrases they have heard before, without always knowing what each individual word means.**

A child might repeat something someone just said (“Do you want juice?” → “Do you want juice?”) or a line from a favourite tv show (“Let’s go on an adventure!”).

It’s a natural part of how some children learn to understand and use language, especially autistic children. It can also be known as ‘gestalt language learning.’

The repeated phrases are often linked with an emotional experience, for example the child has really enjoyed watching bluey, so they repeat a phrase from bluey next time they enjoy something.

When the phrase is repeated later on, the words may not be understood by others and dismissed as ‘jargon’, but in fact may have a really important meaning to the child.

### Signs your child is using Echolalia to communicate...



Enjoys music and songs, often knows whole songs but isn’t using a lot of words.

Using chunks of language that are unintelligible but have melody and intonation.



Enjoys stopping then replaying specific parts of films, programmes, YouTube videos.

Echoes what they have heard from TV, YouTube or people around them, immediately or later on.

‘Scripts’ are used frequently to tell you things or make requests.



Repeating questions rather than answering them.

Reversing pronouns because they are repeating a whole phrase e.g. “Jess is hungry”, “You did it!”

**How to support children who use Echolalia to communicate**

1. **Connection:** focus on building trust and shared joy through special interests



2. Meet **sensory needs:** ensure the child feels comfortable and regulated



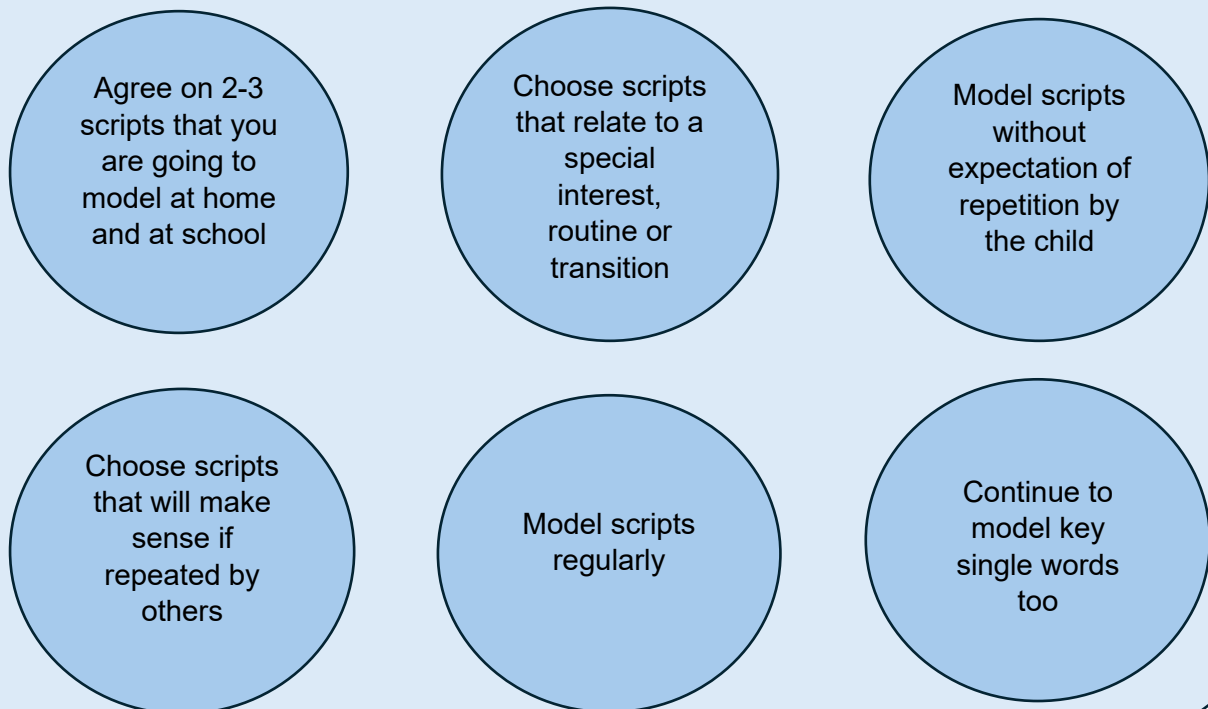
3. **Acknowledge:** smile, nod, repeat back the phrase (also known as a 'script')



4. **Be a detective:** try to work out what the script means to the child. Make a 'dictionary' of scripts.



**5. Model scripts:**



## Script Examples

### Transitions and routines

Let's choose  
It's time for...  
We're finished  
What's next?  
Let's go outside  
I need help  
Want some more  
No more

### Special interest activities

Let's do it again  
I like it  
I don't like it  
This is fun  
Let's blow bubbles  
It's crashed!  
I need help  
Let's build it

### Scripts for different purposes

Commenting → 'It's red juice!'  
Asking for help → 'I need some help'  
Transition → 'What's next'  
Requesting → 'Coat on, home time'  
Protesting → 'No balloons'  
Sharing joy or emotions → 'I love this'  
Routines → 'Time for singing'  
Fun sensory experiences → 'We can squeeze it!'