

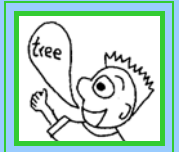
Talking and playing

PLAY
IDEAS 19

ABOUT
TALKING



During the first few years of life your child's ability to express themselves and understand others develops rapidly. Communication is important for survival, belonging, learning, and well-being. Finding time to play with your child each day lets them know you enjoy being together and having fun playing with whatever they are interested in.



LANGUAGE AND DEVELOPMENT



Babies

Babies start to communicate from the time they are born: listening and responding when they are spoken to, imitating sounds, babbling, smiling, laughing and crying. By 18 months most babies have six clear words and understand a lot of what's said to them.



Toddlers

Language is developing rapidly. Toddlers can generally point to things when asked and carry out little tasks for you, eg "Go to your room and find your boots"; "Give this to Daddy, he's outside". Most toddlers can put 2 words together by age 2. They are using short sentences and asking questions ("What's that? Why?") by age 3. They have a large vocabulary (around 200 words), can name food items and body parts, and are learning numbers, colours, shapes, big/little.



Young Children

Conversational skills improve as young children are able to listen to and tell long stories and begin to enjoy jokes. They are able to join complex ideas and sequence events using words like "because, but, so, when, if, then". They love asking questions: Why? When? How? Most can tell you their name, age and address.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- ☛ Talk even if your child doesn't talk yet! Use the words your child would use if they could talk. Pause often, looking and smiling at your child to give them a chance to respond. eg "Up? You want to get up?"
- ☛ Match what you say to their actions in play and daily routines. eg "You got the ball. It's your ball. Throw it!" "Wash your feet. Oh, big splash. You're splashing."
- ☛ Have fun playing with words and sounds, eg "Let's have lunch, munch, munch".
- ☛ As you go about your everyday activities, your child will chat away happily much of the time if you talk to them and let them help you. Remember, play together and talk, read together and talk, walk together and talk!
- ☛ Play together with your baby or young child (just the two of you, if possible) some time each day in a quiet room.
- ☛ Follow your child's lead - this means, look at what your child is doing or looking at and talk about that. For example, say, "Bang Bang", as they bang two blocks together.
- ☛ Every day encourage your child to sit for several minutes while you "share a book" together. Let them join in whatever way they can by helping turn pages, finding things and taking turns to point/talk about pictures. Always welcome their comments and questions.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Babies will suck and mouth books. Board books, with no pull out pieces, are best for babies. Also, be aware of choking hazards, flammable and toxic materials in your play.

SOME ACTIVITIES TO TRY

- ☛ **With your baby**
 - Play turn taking games with sounds, eg "boo" or "peek a boo";
 - Introduce finger plays and rhymes, eg "Round and round the garden"; "This little pig".
 - Look at books together. Those with bright, clear pictures are best, especially photographs of other babies;
 - Respond to your baby's sounds, exclamations, "words" and "conversations" by smiling and saying their sounds back to them.
- ☛ **Creative play** For example playdough, collage, painting and box construction. This gives your child a chance to practise asking for things, maybe asking for help and to talk about what he's doing, planning and making.
- ☛ **Pretend play** This helps your child develop language through the use of their imagination. For example if your child is playing with toy animals or cars, add something that they can pretend is water, maybe some blue paper. You may have to show your child ways of including "the water" in their play.
- ☛ **Walking and talking** Try going on neighbourhood walks and talk about who lives where and what pets and animals you see. Go on a treasure finding walk together - collect "treasure" as you walk and talk about what you see and collect. Walk to the park and play with other children if there are any, talking as you play. Talk about your fun at the park on the way home.

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