



Talking together

Talking from two years onwards

Building your child's language and communication

Toddlers need lots of practice talking with you to help build sentences and learn speech sounds. Your toddler won't be able to make all the speech sounds yet, as some sounds are harder than others. It's normal for words not to sound quite right at this age.

The important thing for your toddler to learn now is new words and how to make sentences. The more they learn now, the easier they will find it to let you know what they want. If your child can communicate with you and knows you understand them it can ease frustration for them and for you. This could mean fewer toddler tantrums.

Talking to your child matters because:

- it will help them build their language and communication skills;
- it will help them to learn social skills and build relationships with others;
- it will help them to learn to read and write later as language forms the base for literacy;
- it will help them feel valued and listened to, therefore build confidence and self-esteem.

At two years old, children can:

- usually say around 40 to 50 words and are beginning to join words together to make sentences such as 'doggie gone' and 'kick ball';
- join in with some nursery rhymes;
- use pretend play with toys and dolls;
- listen to simple stories with pictures;
- understand most everyday words and simple sentences.

Tips for helping words and sentences develop

- Talk to your toddler when you play together – talk about what you are doing.
- Use short, simple sentences when you talk so your toddler can really concentrate on what you're saying.
- When your toddler talks to you, add one or two new words to help build sentences, for example if your child says "doggie gone" you can say "doggie gone home".

- Get your child's attention before you talk to them. Toddlers find it difficult to listen and do something at the same time.
- Let your child lead in play and talk about what they are doing. Children are more likely to remember new words if they are interested in what's happening.
- Listen to your child and give them time to talk. Children take longer to think about what they want to say. Also children who start conversations can find it easier to learn language.
- Be face to face and get eye contact when talking with your child. This helps them feel listened to and helps them understand what you're saying.
- Songs and simple stories are really good for developing language. Let your child turn the pages and simplify the story so they can understand it better. They won't notice you missing out words. Talk about the pictures and point out things that the story is talking about as you read.
- Don't correct your child or ask them

to repeat words back to you. If your child says something wrong, repeat it back correctly so he/she can hear how it's said.

- Offer choices so your child hears the words they have to say and feel that they have some control in the interaction, eg "Do you want milk or juice?"
- Create opportunities for your child to communicate by letting them join in with you in everyday activities such as putting the shopping away. Make the most of times when your child needs your help to get what they want such as reaching a favourite toy, opening a food wrapper or wanting more juice. You could be surprised how much more your child communicates when you don't automatically do things for them.

You may want to talk to someone if:

- your child is using less than 15 to 20 words;
- is not beginning to join two words together;
- you find it difficult to talk to your child;
- your child is not interested in communicating with you;
- you think your child has difficulty hearing you;
- you think your child doesn't understand what you say.

For more information or advice on developing your toddlers language skills, you can contact the Early Communication Team through your local children's centre.

Childrens centre details

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