

# 12 Tips *for* Talking with Toddlers



**1 Talk to the toddler on his level.** Squat down or sit beside him. Comment on what he is doing or seeing. Offer him an intriguing object, or join his play by playing along, providing appropriate words or sound effects.

**3 Narrate your own actions,** thoughts, and feelings for the toddler (self talk). Pause frequently to ask for the child's input and give him a chance to respond.

**5 Talk about a recent event** that was special for the toddler. Use props or pictures to help him remember.

**7 Sing favorite songs frequently,** and encourage the toddler to join in. Listen for the point when gibberish turns into words. Pause before a key word in a song or rhyme to give the toddler a chance to fill it in all by herself.



**9 Provide the toddler with many opportunities** to practice using the words he knows. Read his favorite books over and over so that he can practice naming the pictures.

**11 Repeat the toddler's communication** in words. If you are unsure, ask for confirmation, giving him a chance to repeat the word or gesture or to correct your interpretation. Use complete but simple sentences.

**2 Respond to the toddler's efforts** to keep the conversation going. Whether she uses babble-talk, gibberish, sound effects, gestures, signs, or words, give her the words for what she seems to be trying to say, and pause so that she can repeat the word more clearly.

**4 Provide a play-by-play description** of the toddler's activity and perceptions, just as a sportscaster might comment on a player's actions. When the toddler looks at you with interest or chimes in with words or babbles, stop your narrative and give her a turn to talk.

**6 Take breaks and breathers** during conversations with young toddlers. Most need simple, short sentences and plenty of time to take in the information and formulate a response.

**8 Respond to anything that sounds like a word** and is used with communicative intent. For example, when a child who hears a plane overhead points to the sky and says, "Ane," you might answer, "I see the plane. The plane is high up in the sky."



**10 Use words to help** the toddler name and manage her strong emotions. "That was a loud noise. It made you scared." "You're angry because Sam took your toy."

**12 Accompany language with gestures** that the toddler can copy. Clap "hooray," nod "yes," shake your head "no," or wave "bye-bye."

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how to

# Use Shared Reading

to Promote Emergent Literacy



## PRINT AWARENESS

Use shared storytimes to help children:

- ▶ **Recognize that print is different from pictures.** You can do this by tracking the print in the storybook with your finger as you read, or explicitly stating the difference: "Here's a picture that shows what's happening in the story"; "These are the words that tell the story."
- ▶ **Understand print directionality.** To communicate the sequence in which pages are read, say, "I read this page first [point to the left page], and I read this one next [point to the right page]." To communicate the left-to-right orientation of words, say "I start reading here [point to the first word on a line] and go this way [move a finger in a left-to-right motion under the words]."
- ▶ **Identify the top and bottom of a page.** Say, "I start reading up here [track the first line of print], and then I go to the next line [track left to right under the second line]. I read each one until I come to the bottom [move a finger down the page to the bottom line]. I read each page from top to bottom."
- ▶ **Realize that print tells a story.** Point to the print and explain to the child, "These are the words that tell this story." Check for understanding by saying, "Show me which part tells the story," or asking, "What do these words do?"
- ▶ **Identify the first letter in his or her name.** Select a book that contains several words that begin with the uppercase form of this letter. Show the child a written example of the letter and say you'll be looking for it as you read. Interrupt the story periodically and ask "Can you point to the letter M in this word?"
- ▶ **Learn some letters of the alphabet.** Select a letter used at least three times in a storybook. Show the child a written example of the letter and say you'll be looking for it. Interrupt the story on two or three occasions and ask, "Can you put your finger on the letter T in this word?"
- ▶ **Understand that words are made up of letters.** Select a few words in a storybook that contain two or three letters. If possible, pick words with at least one letter the child already knows. Interrupt the story and point to one of the selected words. Ask "How many letters are in this word?" and help the child point to the letters as he or she counts.
- ▶ **Identify the space between two words.** In a storybook, find two short words next to each other (in here, to the). Point to the two words selected and cover the surrounding words. Ask the child, "How many words do you see here?" Help the child count them, and say "There's a little space between these two words to keep them apart. Can you put your finger on that space?" Direct the child's finger to point to the space between the words.
- ▶ **Point to words individually as they are read by an adult.** Select a page in a storybook that contains at least one page where there are only one or two lines of print. Ask the child, "Can you point to the words on this page as I read each one?" Reading at a slower pace, guide the child's finger for the first several words and then let the child continue independently.

# A Timeline of Talk



## Fun & Easy Activities that Boost Preschoolers' Language Development

Ages 3-4

### 30-36 months

Have your child help you put away things like food or folded laundry. Use words such as *up*, *down*, *over*, or *through*: "Please put the can *on* the shelf" or "Please put your socks *in* the drawer." Thank them for the help! You can give silly directions, too: "Put the lemons *under* the chair."

### 30-36 months

Your child will have fun when you act silly. Pretend you don't know what things really are. Point to the toothpaste and ask, "Is that the soap?" Let him tell you what it really is. Act surprised. Your child will enjoy "teaching" you the right name of things.

### 36-42 months

Put little notes to your child here and there: "You are a very helpful brother to your baby sister," "I noticed you put your toys away," "Dad will read your favorite story at bedtime." Read these notes to your little one so that he learns reading is fun and important.

### 36-42 months

Go for a walk outside and look for living things. Ask your child questions about the world around her. "Where do we see birds?" Up in the sky. "Where do bugs live?" Under rocks. Your child may need a little help at first, but soon she will know the answers.

### 42-48 months

Encourage your child to begin to make up stories of her own. Write them on a piece of paper as she tells them to you. She might like to draw or paint a picture to go along with the story. You can put these stories in a folder to make a book titled, "My Own Stories."

### 42-48 months

Riding the bus or in the car, look for things in a certain category. Find things with wheels, things that are tall, or things of different colors. Choose the category or let your child pick. You might say, "Let's see how many animals we see."

### 48-54 months

Challenge your child to remember and do three things in a single direction. Ask your child to go into the bathroom, flush the toilet, and bring your toothbrush.

### 48-54 months

Go outside and lie on your back and take turns pointing out different cloud shapes and patterns. Ask your child what the clouds look like: "Look. There's an ice cream cone! What do you see?"

### 54-60 months

Set up an office for your child with notebooks, a toy phone, an old keyboard, pencils and pens, a ruler, a calculator, and a calendar. Encourage her to pretend to go to work, write letters, type messages, and make notes. Pretend with her. Call on the phone and ask questions.

### 54-60 months

When the moon is visible, find a place to look at the moon and stars with your child. Explore your child's imagination: "What do you see? Can you connect the stars to make a picture? What do you think it is like on the moon? How would you feel about being so far away from Earth?"

*Don't forget, all activities should be  
safely supervised by an adult!*

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