



## Help Your Child Learn To Talk!

Your child was born to talk! With your help in this area of language skills, he or she will be more likely to do well in school. Children learn to talk by being spoken to and by hearing adults talk to one another. A child who can speak clearly will be better able to explain his or her needs, to answer questions, and to participate in activities at school. Try these suggestions:

### YOUR INFANT:

- Sing songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "Patty Cake." Don't worry; your baby will love your voice! Make up your own words to songs, or even your own songs.
- Keep your baby in a safe seat where he or she can watch and listen to you. Say what you're doing: "I'm washing dishes. Look at the suds!" "I'm paying bills. Paper, paper, paper!"
- "Talk back" to your infant when he or she babbles and coos. Have a "conversation" where the two of you make sounds back and forth.

### YOUR TODDLER:

- Listen and respond to what your child says. Use simple, clear language. Show your child that you are truly interested: "Yes, that's a truck. It's big, isn't it?"
- Sing or say nursery rhymes such as "Jack and Jill" and "Humpty Dumpty." Once your child knows the rhyme, let him or her finish a line: You say, "Jack and Jill when up the..." and then let your child say, "hill."
- Read aloud to your toddler every day. During a story, ask questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?" Let your child act out parts of the story with you.

### YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Include your child in conversations at the dinner table. Ask what he or she did today, or where he or she would like to go next for fun. A park? A friend's house?
- Read aloud to your child everyday. Select books that rhyme and play with the sounds in words. Dr. Seuss books are great for this. Point to letters and words in the book: "What letter is this? It's an 'O!'" Then say the sound of the letter. You can find these books (and CDs for kids) at the public library.
- Play games with word sounds, such as "I Spy." Say, "I spy something that starts with b. It's a yellow fruit. What is it?" At first, you may have to help your child with the answer, which in this case is "banana."
- Sing songs together, especially silly songs that play with the sounds in words, such as "The Name Game." For the name "Nate," it would be "Nate, Nate bow bate, banana fana fo fate, fee fi fo mate, Nate!"
- Limit the amount of television your child watches to no more than a half-hour per day.

ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.  
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