

# Talking & listening

## (Children 18 months - 3 years)

**By age 2, babies string together a few words in short phrases of two to four words, such as "Mommy bye-bye" or "me milk." They're learning that words mean more than objects like "cup" -- they also mean abstract ideas like "mine."**

By the time your baby is age 3, his or her vocabulary expands rapidly and "make-believe" play spurs an understanding of symbolic and abstract language like "now," feelings like "sad," and spatial concepts like "in."

### Conversations while getting dressed

Toddlers are now learning to dress themselves - a big achievement.

To assist children with this skill it is useful to help them learn the names of different parts of the body as well as to learn the names for different pieces of clothing. To assist this you can:

- Sing body-play songs or simply name parts of body as you dress your child.
- Later you can suggest they put their head in the t-shirt first then arms.
- Look in a mirror together and point out and name the different parts of the body.
- Ask toddlers to help when sorting the washing by collecting socks, singlets or one particular piece of clothing. Gradually getting to know all the pieces.
- You can then encourage your child when they are dressing to put on their singlet first then shirt etc, getting to know the order for dressing.

### Touch and Feel Talking Bags

Find a special bag or maybe an empty tissue box to play a guessing game with toddlers. Put some interesting objects in a bag and encourage your child to reach in and feel the object but not look at the object.

Ask them what the object might be? Is it soft or scratchy? Big or little? And so on. When they have guessed what object it is (or are not sure), take it out for a look, then discuss what we do with that object.

#### Activity Suggestions for guessing and conversation

- A hair brush, face washer and soap
- Spoon, fork and cup
- Small book
- Favourite toy
- Sock and shoe
- Different fruits

Objects need to be familiar to your child and also useful to lead to conversation, as one of the values of this game is to help the child develop language and conversation skills.

## Helping toddlers develop their speech

Talking involves making the different sounds that create a word, as well as putting the words in order to create a sentence. It takes a long time and a lot of practise to do this fluently and correctly. So we must be patient and continue to support toddlers in their learning.

It's also important to respond to their attempts even if you are unsure of what they are trying to say. If you cannot understand their words you may have to ask them if they can show you.

If they tell you something but it is not said correctly you can simply repeat their words in a proper sentence so they know you understand and so they can hear a model of how to phrase those words.

### Activity Suggestions

- If the toddler is pointing or whining, ask them to tell you, or say "use their words". Getting down to their level and giving them your attention also helps them to try. Of course, if the toddler makes an obvious effort (even though not all correct) reward them by responding immediately to their request.
- Encouraging a toddler to choose between two options also encourages them to use their words and can avoid many an argument or tantrum - "Tell me, do you like juice or milk?" Listen to their response then agree "Well we will have milk today." (Of course only offer choices that can be provided.)

## Excursions

Now that toddlers are walking, exploring the world is a big adventure.

Short simple excursions can extend their understanding of the world as well as extending their vocabulary. On excursions:

- Talk about what you see.
- Point out new things of interest, putting new words into sentences.
- Ask toddlers simple questions about their interests rather than giving all information immediately.
- Later tell other family members about excursion while your toddler is with them.

### Activity Suggestions for simple excursions

- Choose a place and activity that has some meaning and interest for the child
- The park for a picnic
- A different park to play with a ball
- Somewhere to see an animal (maybe horse in a paddock, puppies in pet shop, fish in an aquarium)
- Visit the library and choose some books to take home
- A short trip on a bus if you usually go places by car.

Check your local library for a story time with young children. Look up phone numbers for your local council or see websites. Story times are free activities organised to introduce your children to the library as well as share and enjoy books together.

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**Story time is a time of special pleasure together.**  
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Stories help children to develop:

- Language skill
- An interest in learning to read
- Imagination
- Problem solving skills
- Concentration

### **Suggestions for picking good books**

- **choose simple stories for toddlers**
- **look for stories about events and actions that are familiar to them**
- **they should have clear realistic pictures that give clues to story (avoid cartoon type pictures for this age group)**
- **simple sentence structure helps children understand and learn**

**Some repetition in words can also help child follow a story and develop concentration.**

### **First Picture Books for 2&3 Years**

Annie's Chair - Deborah Niland  
Can't you sleep, Little Bear? - Martin Waddell  
Cows in the Kitchen - June Crebbin  
Dear Zoo\* - Rod Campbell  
Fuzzy Yellow Ducklings\* - Matthew Van Fleet  
Good Night, Me - Andrew Daddo  
Goodnight, Moon - Margaret Wise Brown  
Kisses for Daddy - Frances Watts Hooray for Fish!  
- Lucy Cousins  
Hungry Bear - Don Wood  
I Love Animals - Flora McDonnell  
I went walking - Sue Machin  
Maisy's Rainbow Dream - Lucy Cousins  
Mister Magnolia - Quentin Blake

Miffy - Dick Bruna  
Mr Gumpy's Outing - John Burningham  
Mr Gumpy's Motor Car - John Burningham  
My Yellow Blanky - Sofia Laguna  
One to Ten and Back Again - Sue Heap  
The Quangle Wangle's Hat - Edward Lear  
Rosie's Walk - Pat Hutchins  
Spot's First Walk\* - Eric Hill  
Sunshine - Jan Ormerod  
The Very Hungry Caterpillar\* - Eric Carle  
The Wheels on the Bus\* - Paul Zelinsky  
Where's My Teddy? - Jez Alborough  
Where's Spot? \* - Eric Hill  
Where the Wild Things Are - Maurice Sendak  
Who sank the Boat? - Pamela Allen

## Want more information?

### **Kids Spot**

Teach your baby fun games and activities to play that are simple and enjoyable for baby and you.

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/things-to-do/collection/baby-games-and-nursery-rhymes/GreatStart>

**Department for Education and Child Development** website with lots of ideas and activities to do with children to make the most of everyday learning opportunities  
[www.greatstart.edu.au](http://www.greatstart.edu.au)

### **The Little Big Book Club**

Provides free packs of books for babies and toddlers – available from libraries and the Child and Family Health Service. The website has free Activity Time and Learning Time sheets to complement books and e-books to read online.  
[www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au](http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au)

### **Dads' Read**

Information for dads about reading with children.  
[www.dadsread.org.au](http://www.dadsread.org.au)

### **Let's Read**

Supports families to share words, rhymes, songs, books and stories with children.  
[www.letsread.com.au](http://www.letsread.com.au)

### **Parent Helpline**

Phone 1300 364 100  
For advice on child health and parenting

### **Raising Children**

The Australian Parenting website. For information on raising children, including information for grandparents raising grandchildren.  
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

## Local Services

### **YWCA NSW - Kids for Life playgroup**

Fun and friendly playgroup with a target age from 0-5yrs.  
Phone 02 6625 5800

### **Lismore Toy Library**

Low cost access to variety of toys  
Phone 02 6622 3424

### **Story time and Baby Bounce**

Lismore and Goonellabah Library  
Phone 02 6625 5100

### **Brighter Futures**

Support services for improving emotional, social, health and education development outcomes for families and their children.  
Phone 02 6682 4334

### **Goonellabah Child and Family Health Centre**

Phone 02 6625 0111  
9am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

*Refer to Service Listing - Baby and Child Services for more information on Playgroups and Activities*