

# Early Childhood Education

## Talking to Your Toddler

**Category: Early Childhood Literacy and Mathematics**

**Grade Band: Ages 12 to 36 months**

**Topic: Daily Activities**

**Concept 1: Learning to strengthen oral language development**

**Context:** Oral language development is the process by which children come to understand and communicate language during early childhood. This development begins the moment a child is born, so it is important to educate parents that they play an extremely important part in this process. It has been demonstrated that children who hear a lot of talk and who are encouraged to talk themselves are better prepared to learn when they enter school. Talking and listening to infants and toddlers are two great ways to prepare them for later success. Reading and writing will come later and are built on that verbal communication that happens before preschool/kindergarten.

**Rationale:** The first step in learning to read is learning to talk. Parents can help influence their child's oral language development by actively engaging with their child during daily routines. By allowing their child to listen to speech, mimic sounds, and associate these sounds with words that represent things and actions, parents can help build a strong foundation of early literacy skill. When children are intentionally exposed to an environment where they hear spoken words and conversations they will learn to talk.

### **Opportunities to strengthen oral language development:**

1. As you are involved in activities during the day, talk about them with your child. Use self talk or think-alouds. For example, give your child a play-by-play of the different things you are doing as you are preparing to go to the grocery store. Remember not to use "baby-talk" but instead talk to your toddler as you would a friend or adult family member.
2. Let your child know that you hear her when she is beginning to talk and starting to say words. Repeat the words she makes. Smile back at her. Add a variety of facial expressions. When you respond to her, she learns that what she "says" means something and is important to you. She also learns that communication is a turn-taking activity
3. When your child begins to speak, build his language and vocabulary. A child starts talking by using single words and short sentences. You can help by filling in missing words and using complete sentences. For example,

Child: "Cracker"

Parent: "Oh you want a cracker? Ok, you can have two more crackers."

Child: "Go store"

Parent: "Yes, we are all going to go to the store. But first, you have to put on your coat, hat and mittens."

4. Share conversations with your child during mealtime and the other times you are together. Work to add comments and new words into the conversation as a way to increase word development. This will help improve and build his/her vocabulary.
5. Encourage your child to talk with you. Ask questions that show you are interested in what she thinks and says. Ask her to share ideas and events that are important to her. Ask her open-ended questions that require her to talk rather than just give yes or no or one word or two word answers. For example...(need example). Listen carefully to what she says. Try to extend your child's comments by adding more description. Add more description to your talk. Work to make this conversational in manner.
6. Listen to your child's questions and answer them patiently. Take time to explain things to him as completely as needed for the child to understand at his or her level. Keep answering questions that your child asks again and again, because children learn from hearing things over and over. They also like hearing books read and reread to them.
7. Continue taking your child to places that are new to her. Together, explore and enjoy the world around you. Take delight in the simple things and then talk about them.
8. Work to have intentional conversations with your child. Children need lots of opportunities to build spoken language by talking and listening.
9. Encourage siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and other caregivers to have intentional conversations with your new child too.
10. Make sure to read books to your child each and every day.

### **Mathematical Connections:**

1. Use number words as you talk to your child.  
Children, who are able to count rote (recite number names in order), often do not understand that the numbers relate to the size of a set. Using number words helps children develop this concept. Say, "There are three blocks on the floor." rather than, "There are some blocks on the floor." The infant/toddler may not initially necessarily understand what the three means, but they are learning.  
Source:  
[http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub\\_releases/2010-11/uoc-pst110910.php#](http://www.eurekaalert.org/pub_releases/2010-11/uoc-pst110910.php#)
2. Counting  
The first step in learning to count objects is learning to say the number names in sequence. Sing songs with numbers, model counting, and help your child count small groups of objects. Count your child's fingers and toes, count the steps as you go up and down stairs, count the number of plates as you set the table, etc.

For infants and toddlers, we loosely use their age as how far they can count with meaning. So for twos, they can often count to 2 and understand what that means. Once they hit 4-5, depending on their experiences, of course, then they can understand larger sets.

3. Use words to describe spatial concepts.  
Above, below, up, down, behind, under, in, out, etc. Make sense of these concepts as you interact with your child. When you play peek-a-boo say, "Where's Brittany? Oh she's behind or under the blanket. Let's put the toys inside the box. The ball is still outside the box. Where are your shoes? Oh I see them on top of the toy box." These are very important right on up through preschool!
4. Use words to compare objects and develop understanding of measurement concepts.  
As you play, talk about the toys. Bigger tends to be a common word. Also use words like taller, heavier, longer, etc. "This bear is taller than the doll. This doll has longer hair than that doll."
5. Geometry  
Use the names of shapes as you play with toys like shape sorters. Notice shapes in your house. "The bear's nose is a circle. The front of this book is a square."

**Social Skills: Turn-taking/executive function (conversation), sharing ideas (asking open-ended questions), self-concept, individuation from parents, object permanence (math and more),**

**Endorsement:**