

Talking With Your Toddler— Development of Spoken Language and Vocabulary Development (Questioning) Activities for Families

- To teach a child to answer **“yes”/“no” questions**, hide a toy or other object under one of two or three bowls. Let your child watch you hide the object. Then ask, “Is it here?” and pick up one of the bowls. Nod your head and say, “Yes, it is here” or “No, it is not.” Eventually, your child will be able to answer the “Is it here?” question. As your child grows older, increase the number of bowls and don’t let him watch you hide the object. Sometimes, let him hide the object and ask you the question, “Is it here?”
- To help your child practice answering **“where” questions**, hide a familiar object somewhere in your home as your child watches you do so. Ask him, “Where is the ___?” As he gets older, don’t let him watch where you hide it. Then, when you ask him, “Where is it?” and he starts searching for it, tell him when he is “hot” (near the object) or “cold” (moving away from the object). You can also have your child hide an object and you look for it. During the search, keep asking, **“Where is it?”**
- With toddlers, ask questions like, “Are you a dog?” “Is your hat on your head or foot?” “Can a cat ride a bike?” **The sillier the question, the more your child will like it.** With younger children, accept a head nod but always encourage them to answer “yes”/“no”. As they get older, ask them to say a complete sentence, “No, I am not a dog.”
- Ask your child questions that **give her a choice**: “Are you a dog or a girl?”
- To help your child practice answering **“who” questions**, look at photograph albums together. Children love to look at family members and relive family events. Point to familiar family members and ask, “Who is that?” Don’t bombard your child with only “who” questions though. Spend time talking together about the photos. Let your child hear your voice, words, and expressions. Mix in all of three types of questions (yes/no, “wh” questions, and open-ended questions).