

Talking With Your Toddler-- Development of Spoken Language and Vocabulary Development (Questioning)

Advice to Families

- **Ask questions** whenever you are having a conversation with your child. Turn off electronic devices during mealtimes, while running errands, and/or playing games. Take time to talk with each other.
- **Follow your child's lead.** Ask her questions about what she is interested in. Notice what she is looking at, listening to, touching, tasting, feeling or doing—what she is experiencing in her world. These are the things that are meaningful to her.
- After you ask a question, **give your child at least 5 seconds to respond** before asking another question or answering the first question yourself. Children need more time than adults to think about the question and decide how to answer it. Your child may know the answer if you give him time.
- **Ask only one question at a time.** You may say, “Where is your brother? Is he watching TV? Does he know it is time to eat?” Children won’t know what question to answer! Ask one question and wait 5 seconds before asking another to give the child time to respond.
- If you ask your child a question and he doesn’t answer, you can: 1) **repeat** the question and pause longer waiting for an answer, 2) **rephrase** the question using simpler words, 3) rephrase the question to give the child a choice: Instead of asking, “What color is your coat?” ask “Is your coat red or black?” 4) **answer the question yourself.**
- Although most toddlers won’t be able to answer **open-ended questions**, get in the habit of asking them. After you ask the question, watch your child for cues indicating what he is thinking and/or feeling. Then answer the question yourself. For example, if you and your child are fixing the front door, you might say, “How can we fix the door?” If you notice your child looks at or points to the toolbox that you have with you, you could say, “That’s a good idea. We can use the screwdriver and screws to fix the door.”