

Activities to Help Your Child Learn About Language

Here are some activities to help your child learn about language. Do them for as long as your child enjoys them. Then add new activities as your child grows older.

Age

Newborn to 3 months

- Listen and talk to your baby throughout the day.
- Find out what your baby's sounds and actions mean. Talk to your child about what he or she seems to be saying.
- While feeding, diapering, and bathing your baby, take time to sing songs, say nursery rhymes, and smile and coo in response to the baby's smiles and coos.
- Smile and praise your baby for learning something new.

3 to 8 months

- Talk and play with your baby.
- Use words and play actions when talking with your baby.
- Play games with your baby, such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake, that teach your child about taking turns when communicating with another person.
- Place a rattle in your baby's hand. Hold out a squeeze toy for your baby to grab.
- Hand things to your baby and ask the baby to hand them back.

8 to 12 months

- Read and tell stories with your baby every day.
- Make reading a shared experience. Point to pictures and name the objects.
- Provide books that are safe to touch and taste. Cloth, vinyl, and washable books are good for babies to handle.
- When you read to your baby, hold the baby on your lap and hold the book so that the baby can see the pictures.
- Use puppets, dolls, and other toys as story props.

12 to 18 months

- Provide play materials that match your baby's skill and interest.
- Let your child "play telephone." Have a pretend telephone conversation.
- Let your child play with pots, pans, wooden spoons, plastic containers, and other safe household items.
- Arrange pillows and other objects on the floor for your child to crawl around or on and play with.

18 to 24 months

- Help your toddler talk about the present, the past, and the future.
- Help your toddler learn new words to talk about what he or she did in the past and will do in the future.

"I think it's going to be sunny tomorrow. What would you like to do?"

- Discuss the day's events at bedtime. "Remember when we went to the park?"

24 to 36 months

- Read books and do activities that let toddlers join in.
- Play make-believe with your toddler. Provide props so that the toddler can play dress-up or doctor.
- Arrange a special time for reading.
- Respond to your toddler's request to be read to.
- Read some of the same books again and again, and encourage your toddler to join in with the words he or she knows.

3 to 4 years

- Provide books in English and in your family's home language.
- Let your child see him- or herself in books. Choose some books about families like yours and people from your cultural and ethnic group.
- Have a special place for books, magazines, and other reading materials in the home. Your child should be able to reach books without help in a reading corner and in other places around the home.
- Help your child to create his or her own "This Is Me" album. Together with your child look at and talk about the family album, photographs, or special memorabilia.

4 to 5 years

- Show your child how reading and writing are important in daily life.
- Point out the print around you and show how it serves a purpose. Watch TV together and talk about books that relate to topics seen on TV.
- Let your child see you enjoying a book or magazine often.
- Encourage reading in different places. When you go out with your child, take books for the child to read in the car or on the bus.

5 to 6 years

- Make sure that your child has writing materials and places to write.
- Let your child see you write every day.
- Put writing materials for your child -- paper, pencils, crayons, markers, and chalk -- in an open box on a low shelf so that the child can reach them easily.
- Talk with your child about his or her writing.
- If you cannot read the words your child has written, ask your child to read the writing to you. Over time, your child will learn how to write words that others can read.



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