

# Talking is Teaching

## Talk, Read, Sing

When you talk, read, and sing with your child, you're strengthening your bond with them and helping them learn. Research shows that talking, reading, and singing with your child every day from birth builds their brain as well as important language, math, reading, and social-emotional skills.

You probably naturally talk to your child about the things you do and see each day. We encourage you to keep doing it and do it more, in whatever language you feel comfortable speaking at home. The more conversations, songs, and stories you share during your everyday moments together, the more you are preparing your child to succeed in school and in life!

For children with disabilities or delays, communicate with your service providers and keep each other informed about the strategies you are using to enhance your child's language environment.

### Tips for Infants and Toddlers

#### Talk

- **Listen to and repeat the fun sounds your baby makes.** When they coo, coo back. Hold their hand gently and when they smile, smile back. Your loving touch combined with this back-and-forth "baby language" are the first steps in talking.
- **Talk about what you see. Everywhere you go, comment on what your baby is looking at.** "Wow, I see the four dogs, too!" "I love that red truck you're playing with. It goes beep beep!" A stop sign, a traffic light, or a tree might seem boring to you, but it is a whole new world to your child, so teach them about it!
- **Play games together during your everyday routine.** Play "peek-a-boo" while getting your baby dressed and ask, "Where's (baby's name)?" when you pull a shirt over your baby's head. Then say, "There you are!" Play "I Spy" in the grocery store together. Choose a color and encourage your child to point out objects that match the color.
- **Describe what foods taste, feel, and look like.** As you feed your baby, say, "This yogurt is smooth." "That yellow banana is sweet!"
- **Help your child grow to be a confident, loving adult.** Look into your baby's eyes, hold their hand, and talk to your baby in a high voice.

#### Read

- **Inspire a love of books and words.** Read a book or tell a story to your baby every day, in whatever language you feel most comfortable speaking beginning at birth. Reading or telling stories together every day encourages learning and language development.
- **Cuddle with your baby as you share a book.** It doesn't matter how young your child is, even newborn babies are learning when their parents read to them.
- **Point to the pictures in the book.** "Look, the train goes choo-choo!" Using words to describe what you see builds language. Ask open ended questions as you share the book together. "What do you see? How does he feel? What would you do if you were her? What's your favorite page?"



#### Sing

- **Hold your baby close during bedtime.** Singing the same song can help your baby feel calm and safe. Sing a favorite song again and again!
- **Create silly songs about your day.** Driving in the car and bath time are good opportunities to foster language development. It can be repetitive and simple, like "wash your toes, wash your nose!"
- **Share your voice with your baby.** Your baby loves to hear your voice even if you think you can't sing! The sound of your voice is comforting to your baby.
- **Share activities together through singing.** Your toddler loves to get positive attention from you. Singing is a great way for you and your toddler to share an activity together.

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### Tips for Preschoolers

#### Talk

- **Tune in and listen to your child.** What are they noticing, pointing to, or asking questions about? Use these moments to spark fun conversations with your child. For example, “I see the shiny yellow bus, too. Who do you think is on the bus?”
- **Share back-and-forth conversations.** When talking together, try to take turns listening and speaking. When you keep the conversation going for as long as possible, you’re helping your child develop language skills and also showing that their words are important to you.
- **Use new and interesting words.** Young children learn new and big words if you clearly show and explain what they mean. For example, when you see something very big, you might say, “That is an enormous building!” or “I spy a gigantic truck!”
- **Talk together in your home language.** Using your home language provides great benefits to your child’s brain development. It’s also a wonderful way for you to pass on your family’s rich heritage. The easiest, most important way to do this is by speaking together in your home language every day. Enjoy sharing fun stories, poems, rhymes, and songs from your own childhood.



USE THE WORD  
“ENORMOUS”  
INSTEAD OF “BIG!”

#### Read

- **Cuddle up and read together every day.** It’s never too early to inspire a love of reading, so try to make reading a part of your daily routine like nap time or bedtime. Your child loves the feeling of being close to you and sharing a story together. If you don’t feel comfortable reading, feel free to make up your own story about the pictures you see in the book or about your day together.
- **Read anywhere you are.** Pack a book in your bag so you can read it together wherever you are, such as the bus, store, or park. You can even point to and read words that are all around you, on street signs, in stores, and around the neighborhood.
- **Make book reading fun and exciting.** Try to ask “Who? What? When? Where? Why?” questions along the way to encourage your child to talk about what’s happening in the story. You can also use different voices and gestures to act out the characters or story.
- **Allow children to read the same books over and over.** It’s natural for children to want to keep reading the same books. Sometimes they have a favorite book that is comforting and familiar for them to hear over and over, and sometimes the story relates to an experience they’re having. Each time, try to point out new words, ideas, or pictures and talk about them together.

#### Sing

- **Choose fun songs to sing together.** Try to choose songs you and your child can enjoy singing together. Songs with rhymes and repeating words can help make it easier for children to remember the lyrics. Encourage your preschoolers to fill in the last word to a song. For example, “Old MacDonald had a... FARM!”
- **Make up fun songs throughout the day.** Use your daily moments like washing clothes, cooking, or cleaning to come up with fun words to sing out loud together. You can replace words to familiar songs like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” with phrases to describe the things you’re doing together.
- **Sing songs that connect to your culture or background.** Singing songs from your own childhood or culture can help your child learn new words while keeping them connected to your family’s heritage. You can also have fun adding traditional dances while you sing together.
- **Use hand and body movements.** Creating fun movements to go along with the lyrics can help children get excited about a song while learning new words and concepts. You can even encourage your preschooler to make up some silly moves!



For more information visit  
[talkingisteaching.org](http://talkingisteaching.org).

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Hearing- and speech-impaired citizens can dial 711.