



Toddler Speech Development: Parent Suggestions

Self-Talk to Your Toddler

Talk about whatever you're doing, seeing, eating, touching, or thinking when your child is present. Describe your actions. For example, "I'm washing the plates. Now, I'm drying them. All done."

Parallel Talk with Your Toddler

Speak to your child about what he is doing, seeing, eating, or touching. Describe what he is doing. For example, "Nolan is building a tower. Wow. That's a big tower!"

Follow Your Toddler's Lead

Talk about what your child wants to talk about. If your child is touching a doll's hair, then talk about its hair. If she is looking at the dog, then talk about the dog. Acknowledge the child's words, phrases, and actions by saying something or doing something. Copy her actions, and then repeat & restate what she says. Be responsive to what she does or says, even if it's not a real word.

Question a Little, but Not a Lot

Don't overwhelm your child with too many questions. Remember to balance questions with comments. As a rule of thumb, saying three comments before asking one question works well.

Pause for Your Toddler to Speak

Wait three to five seconds to give your child a chance to respond to what you have asked or said. Show that you are waiting expectantly by raising your eyebrows, smiling, and opening your mouth.

Sentence Completion Tasks

This technique is best suited for older children, or those who have stronger comprehension skills. Try pairing verbal cues with visual or tactile input. For example, while giving him his shirt, say, "Here's your shirt. Put on your _____." Additional prompting may include use of phonemic cues. A phonemic cue is when you give the first sound of the target word. They help children retrieve words and say them quicker. For example, while giving him his shirt, say, "Here's your shirt. Put on your sh_____."

Give Choices to Your Toddler

Give your child choices: "Do you want to eat crackers or grapes?" or "Do you want the cow or the horse?" Doing so puts indirect pressure on the toddler by presenting him with a concrete choice.

Missed Something Oops!

Forget something essential or skip an important step in a routine. Most children know when a routine has been violated and like to point it out.

Silly Sounds & Gestures, - Help

Use these cues to help the child understand your intentions. If you want his rubber duck, then make a quack quack motion with your hands (or 4 fingers come together to touch the thumb) while saying "quack quack."

Set Up a Challenge

Set up a scenario so that the child has to ask for help or assistance. Give him a box or bag you know he can't open, or give him a task you know he may struggle with, so that you can encourage him to ask for help.

Expand Words & Grammar

Add grammatically correct information to your child's meaningful, yet incomplete utterances. If your child says, "boy run," then you could say, "Yes, the boy is running." Add in the missing words.

Enabling Children to Reach Their Full Potential