

Help Your Child Learn To Communicate!

From the very first days of his/her life, your child is learning to communicate. Language and literacy are how your child learns to express his needs and understand others by talking, listening, and reading and writing. These are important for his getting ready to start school.

Everything you do with your child, from infancy through preschool, has an effect on his/her language skills and her ability to learn to read. Help your child by:

YOUR INFANT:

Read to your infant every day. Hold baby in your lap while you read, talk about the book, and point to the pictures. Use short, simple sentences. Even sing some of the words!

When you're in the car or in a store, talk to baby about where you are and what you are doing.

During bath time and dressing, name parts of her body: toes, fingers, hair, or tummy.

When your baby makes sounds, have a "conversation" by making sounds back at him/her. Ask him/her questions, and then reply to his/her responses.

YOUR TODDLER:

Have story time every day. When you read, leave out parts that are repeated and see if your toddler will fill them in.

Sing! You can sing parts of stories, sing to the radio, or make up silly songs and sing them to make your toddler laugh. Then ask your child to sing to you!

Provide washable crayons, markers and paper so your toddler can write and draw.

Repeat things that your child says. For instance, if he says, "Pop!" you can say, "Yes, you popped that bubble!"

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

Read with your preschooler. Find books with simple sequences of events, and talk with your child about what happens first, next, and last.

Let your preschooler "read" books to you that he has memorised. Or ask him to make up a story.

Act delighted at what your child can do!

Pretend to be in a restaurant where you take turns writing down each other's orders. Also, point out the words on stop signs, billboards, cereal boxes, etc.

Help your child to become aware of sounds in letters. Play games: "What starts with 'm'?" "What ends with 't'?"

Ask your child to tell you about what she did today. Listen closely and be interested!

ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.

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