

Your 2 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



2 year olds start to put words together!

Your 2 year old is starting to tell you lots of things. They use words more often than gestures to tell you what they need. They understand and say new words every day. They use 2 or more words together to ask for something, like “more milk?” They get you to do something, like “ball down,” and they tell you about something, like “puppy eat food.”

Your child is also a great copier. They repeat everything they hear. They understand more than they can say right now. They can follow simple directions, but often say, “No!” By the time they are 3 years old, your child will say at least 3 to 4 word sentences and use too many words to count.

How children learn language

Your child learns about their world by seeing, touching, listening, tasting, and doing. Any activity you do together is a chance to learn language. Talk, read, and sing with your child in the language, or languages, you use at home.

As the parent or caregiver of a 2 year old, you play a big role in your child’s learning. How you talk and respond to your child makes a difference. Children learn to talk through back-and-forth interactions. Everyday activities can be interactions that help your child build language. Talk to your child during bath time, dressing, going to the park, playing, and cleaning up. Repeat words and short sentences that go along with these activities.



It's never too early to help your child with speech and language development.



For more information scan this QR code or visit: ahs.ca/talkbox



Current as of: November 20, 2024

Parents and caregivers make the difference.

Try these tips in your language

When talking

- **Use short, simple sentences.** Say, “Get your shoes,” instead of “Go get your brown shoes and put them on.”
- **Take turns with your child and give them time to talk.** Sometimes they need up to 5 seconds before answering you.
- **Add a new word to what your child says.** If they say, “daddy’s shoe,” you can say, “daddy’s stinky shoe.”
- **Repeat what your child has said.** Use complete sentences and correct sounds. You don’t have to make them copy you.
- **Get face to face with your child.** Get to your child’s level by sitting on the floor or bending down. You can also bring your child up to your level.

When playing or doing everyday activities

- **Let your child be the leader.** Watch how they’re playing. Talk about what they’re doing or what they’re playing with.
- **Use the same words and sentences over and over.** Repeating helps your child to learn language.

Telling stories and reading books helps your child learn language. Good language skills will help them learn to read and write.



When telling stories and reading

- **Look at books together every day.** Keep them in a place your child can reach.
- **Pick books that use the same words or sentences over and over.** Look for lots of pictures and not too many words on each page.
- **Make up your own story.** Tell your own story to go with the pictures, instead of reading the words on the page.
- **Use family photos.** Share a family memory or make up a story about your family.
- **Have your child tell a story to go with a familiar book.** They can tell the story to you or their stuffed animals.

When singing

- **Sing songs over and over.** Make them part of your routines. For example, “This is the way we brush our teeth,” or “clean up, clean up.”
- **Sing slowly.** Slow down and take lots of pauses to help your child hear all the words and try to sing along.
- **Use actions.** Make up actions to go along with the words of the song.
- **Pause and let your child fill in a word.** For example, start singing “Twinkle, twinkle, little . . .” and then pause.
- **Sing songs in the language, or languages, you speak at home.**



Children learn by doing

Activities to try

- Bring different toys into the bathtub. Talk about the toys.
- Let your child help with cooking. Talk about what you are doing. Say, “stir, stir,” or “Pour the water in.”
- When driving, talk about things you see out the window. Say, “There’s a big bus,” “I see a blue dump truck,” or “The horse is running.”
- Use interesting moments to teach new words. These may include going to a celebration, going to the dentist or doctor, seeing a broken toy, or looking at spilled juice.

Some children use apps or devices to communicate, which is called Augmentative and Alternative Communication. These programs are designed to support communication and are not considered screen time.

Screens and your child

Children learn language best from taking turns. Time spent on a screen is a missed chance to talk. Minimize screen time. Screen time is using a tablet, phone, television, or other screen. To learn more about screen time, ask a healthcare provider or visit caringforkids.cps.ca

What to expect

2 year olds:

- understand simple questions, like “Where is mommy or daddy?” and “Where is your shoe?”
- understand simple directions, like “Get your blanket.”
- say 2 words together, like “more milk” and “Mommy eat.”
- say at least 50 words and understand many more. Words are not always clear, like “du” for shoe.
- look at your face to see how to react in a new situation.
- know to hold books the right way up and turns pages.

2 year olds:

- may use sounds like m, p, b, w, t, d, n, h, and several vowel sounds, like ah, ee, oh and oo.
- are understood by parents and caregivers about half the time and less by unfamiliar people.

When to get help

Reach out for help if your child:

- doesn't understand what is expected for their age.
- doesn't use 2 words together.
- isn't saying many different sounds.
- doesn't interact with you or other people.
- had some words but has lost them.

Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. For more information go to: ahs.ca/pedrehab

3 year olds:

- answer simple questions, like “What's your name?” and “Which one is the big doll?”
- put a toy or object in, on, and under when asked.
- say 3 to 4 words together, like “I want more juice” and “Mommy is at work.”
- talk back and forth with you for at least 2 turns in a conversation.
- notice other children and play alongside them.
- listen when you read books and tell stories for 5 to 15 minutes.



For more ideas

- [hanen.org](https://www.hanen.org)
- [firstwords.ca](https://www.firstwords.ca)