

Your 3 Year Old

Speech and Language Tips



3 year olds have an explosion of language!

Big changes are happening in your 3 year old's speech and language. They use more words than you can count and seem to learn new words every day. Your 3 year old now has conversations with you. They use at least 3 to 4 words together in sentences. They talk about what they see, how they feel, what's happened in the past, and what they want to do next. They answer your questions and ask questions of their own. They want to know about everything. They seem to be constantly asking, "Why?"



How children learn language

Your child learns about their world by seeing, touching, listening, tasting, and doing. Any activity that 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 a parent or caregiver, you play a big role in your child's learning. How you talk and respond to your child makes a difference. Taking back-and forth turns with your child in everyday activities will help build your child's 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.



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

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



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Parents and caregivers make the difference.

Try these tips in your language

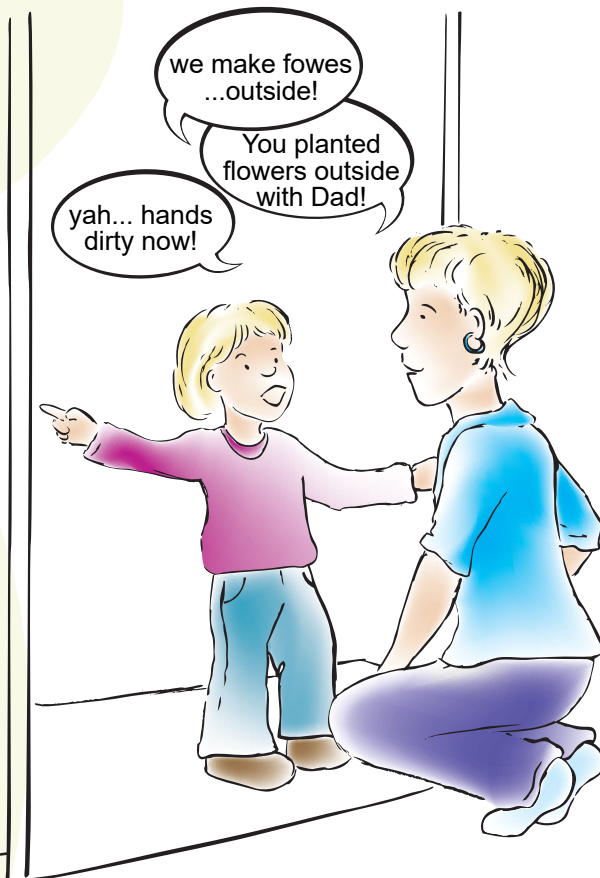
When talking

- **Repeat what your child says.** Use the correct words or sounds. You don't need to make them correct it. They might say, "Him want to go to de tore." You can say, "Yes, he wants to go to the store."
- **Add new words and ideas to what they say.** Use different words that mean the same thing. Something big can be huge or large. Say these new words a little bit louder. "That bus is huge."
- **Ask questions that get your child to say more than 1 or 2 word answers.** Ask, "What's she going to do?" instead of "Is she going to bed?"
- **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.** Let them play the way they like. Join in and play. Talk about what they're doing or what they want to do.
- **Don't ask too many questions.** Instead, talk about what you and your child are doing and wait for them to take a turn.

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

- **Tell stories and read books every day.** Your child likes to hear the same stories over and over.
- **Make up your own story.** Tell your own story to go with the pictures, instead of reading the words on the page.
- **Take turns reading a page at a time.** Have your child tell you the story in their own words.
- **Let them finish.** Pause while reading a familiar story and let your child finish a sentence.

When singing

- **Make up songs.** Change the words to a familiar song.
- **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.
- **Sing songs in the language, or languages, you speak at home.**

Children learn by doing

Activities to try

- Let your child help with cooking. Talk about what you are doing. Say, “stir, stir,” or “Pour the water in.”
- Plant flowers together. Talk about what you need: a shovel, dirt, a pot, and water. Talk about each step as it happens, “First, we put the dirt in.” Describe how the dirt feels. After you’re done, talk about what you did. Have your child tell someone else what you did together.
- Have your child help you make a sandwich. “First, we put the peanut butter on. What comes next?”
- When you go to a new place, ask your child about what they think will happen there.
- Use interesting moments to teach new words. These may include a celebration, going to the dentist or doctor, seeing a broken toy, or looking at spilled juice.

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

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.



What to expect

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.

3 year olds:

- use the following sounds correctly: p, b, m, d, n, h, w and most vowel sounds.
- may start using sounds like g, k, f, t, ng (as in sing), and y.
- are understood by parents and caregivers most of the time and about half of the time 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 many different words or sentences.
- doesn’t interact with you or other children.
- isn’t easily understood or gets frustrated when talking.

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

4 year olds:

- pay attention to short stories.
- understand questions about a picture in a story, like “Where did the bunny go?”
- use specific words to name things, like “fireman” instead of “guy”.
- use sentences that are longer and more complete, like “I want to go out and play on the swing.”
- use a lot of sentences that have four or more words.
- pretend to be something else during play (like a teacher) with other children.
- can identify familiar signs and labels, like stop signs.



For more ideas

- hanen.org
- firstwords.ca