

Encouraging Toddlers to Talk

- 1. Encourage Talking with Bubble Blowing** – Encourage toddlers to play at games that involve blowing. The games could be as simple as blowing bubbles with a bubble wand.
- 2. Encourage Talking with Music-Making** – Give toddlers blowing-related musical instruments. Find an age-appropriate musical instrument like a plastic flute, kazoo or whistle.
- 3. Use a Mirror to Show Mouth Awareness** – Sit with your toddler in your lap facing a mirror. Talk to your toddler, drawing attention to your mouth while you speak.
- 4. Offer Verbal Choices** – One of the more effective ways to get a toddler to talk is to offer choices when it is time for a drink, a meal or a snack. For example, do not ask your toddler what they want – give them a choice between two items: “Do you want juice or milk?”
- 5. Ask Simple Yes/No Questions** – During the day, ask your toddler questions that require a simple yes or no response. Teach by example by both nodding yes and saying “Yes” at the same time or shaking your head and saying “No.” The toddler who may already nod will make that connection.
- 6. Read Every Day to Encourage Expressive Language** – When you read picture books with your toddler, use simple books that have pictures that you can label for the child. Encourage your toddler to repeat the words as you read the book together. Be patient. Some words will come more easily than others.
- 7. Encourage Imitation** – Toddlers are natural imitators. When mom or dad makes raspberries or blows kisses, the toddler will follow. These simple activities also encourage your toddler to become aware and use their lips and tongue to make noises.
- 8. Encourage Animal Sounds** – Have you ever wondered why animals and animal sounds are such a big part of toys and books for the toddler set? The extended vowel sounds that you find in animals sounds like “Moo” and “Baa” are the basics that toddlers need to grow their vocabulary. Use books or toys that are animal-focused and encourage the use of animal signs and animal labeling.
- 9. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat** – Parents of a toddler with an expressive language delay should be tired of their own voices. Repeat words over and over, encouraging the toddler to repeat after you and play along. Make new connections for them by adding a new word to a familiar word (e.g., “BIG ball”).
- 10. Encourage Verbal Communication** – Your toddler may know signs for “More,” or “All done” or other important toddler concepts, and may rely on those heavily. When your toddler uses the sign, repeat the sign back to them, using the word associated with it. Repeat it several times, trying to encourage the toddler to try to imitate it back. Eventually, the toddler will start using the word with the sign and later the sign will be dropped completely.