

# TALKING TO YOUR TODDLER: HOW YOU TALK AND HOW MUCH YOU TALK MATTERS



The research of Betty Hart, Ph.D. and Todd Riley, Ph.D. from the University of Kansas, found that although quality matters when it comes to verbal interactions between a parent and child, quantity also has a big impact on later academic performance. Specifically, parents that reached or exceeded 30,000 words a day had a significant impact on their child's language development and future academic success.

## ***How do you reach 30,000 words per day?***

**Talk to/with your child:** You can talk to your child across his/her day using two different kinds of talking, both provide exposure to useful vocabulary and language structure.

- **Business Talk:** This is the language we use to move through our day such as, "pick up your toys, it's time for a nap, get your shoes, lets go bye bye," etc.
- **Extra Talk:** This is the chit chat or small talk we use to help children learn about new things in their world. There are two types of extra talk, 1. Self-Talk: describing what you are seeing, doing, feeling, hearing, etc. and 2. Parallel-Talk: describing what your child is seeing, doing, feeling, hearing, etc.

## **Read to/with your child:**

- Reading out loud to your child is one of the most important activities for enhancing children's speech, language and listening skills. Research shows that children who are read to during their toddler years tend to be better readers when they get to school
- Set up a predictable, scheduled time to "read" to your child everyday. Before nap time or bed time are great because it helps children wind down and calm for resting.
- Balance between reading the stories to your child (books that are at his/her level) and just talking about what is on the page. Balance commenting ("I see a gorilla) with questions (what is that?) is a nice way to keep your child engaged.
- Children often prefer to read their favorites over and over again. Pick your reading spot and fill a basket with their favorites. Rotate the content periodically as their interest change.

**Sing to/with your child:** Refer to "How to Sing with Toddlers the Hanen Way" by Lauren Lowry, SLP at [hanen.org](http://hanen.org)

## **Key points to think about:**

- Children enjoy music in a variety of ways, including dancing, making gestures and hand movements along with songs, and even singing some of the words and sounds
- Children can enjoy toddler friendly familiar songs like, "wheels on the bus," and "twinkle twinkle little star," and they may enjoy their own personal songs you can make up together that correspond to your daily routines so that you can sing through the day.
- Allow opportunities for your child to fill in familiar sounds, words or gestures when singing songs they are familiar with by pausing and waiting for them to take their turn (e.g "twinkle twinkle little \_\_\_\_\_").
- Using familiar tunes, you can substitute the words to match your activity (e.g to the tune of "all around the mulberry bush," you can sing, "this is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands, this is the way we wash our hands after we play outside")

***\*Remember: Have fun talking, reading and singing with your little ones.***