

Listening and talking frequently (0-3 years)

When to start listening and talking with your child

You can start talking and listening to your child from birth. Even before your baby can use words, you can still have a 'conversation' with her by taking turns making and copying sounds, expressions and gestures. As your child begins to learn words, she will copy the words you use and learn more about how words and sentences work.

Why is it important to listen and talk to your child frequently?

Your child learns a lot when she listens to you talk. Speaking often to your child, using lots of different words, makes a big difference to her language development. But it is also important for her to learn about two-way conversations. So, make sure you allow your child time to respond to what you are saying, and listen and respond to her when she does.

Tips to help your child by listening and talking frequently

Any time that you and your child are together is an opportunity for talking and listening. Here are some ideas to get you talking and listening more often:

- Copy your baby or child's sounds – do not forget to take turns.
- Talk to your baby in different ways, use adult speech and 'baby talk' – babies get excited when they are spoken to in interesting ways.
- Move closer to your child and make eye contact with her when she is communicating with you, so that she knows she has your attention.
- Talk to your child about something that has just happened – for example, 'Wow that was a big truck that just drove past! Did that make you jump?'
- Talk to your child about what you are doing – for example, 'I'm cutting this orange into small pieces so that we can all have a piece'.
- Describe experiences, and ask what things feel like – for example, 'Let's put you in the bath. Does that feel nice and warm?' You can describe what you can see, taste, smell and hear, as well as what emotions you are feeling.
- Sing with your child. You can take turns to sing or sing together. You can teach your child some simple songs, or just sing without words.
- Respond when your child asks you a question. You can also try and extend the conversation with another question. For example, 'Yes, Daddy will be home soon. Where do you think he is now? Still on the train?'
- Take turns when talking with your child so she has an opportunity to interact with you. Give her enough time to respond.

- Encourage your child to say more about a subject by asking 'wh' questions – questions that begin with 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when' and 'who'.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

For some suggestions on rhymes, click [here](#) to download a booklet on rhymes!

Recommended Reads

- [I can listen](#)
- [Hand in hand](#)
- [Your baby is speaking to you: a visual guide to the amazing behaviors of your newborn and growing babies](#)