



Ways to Encourage Communication and Language Development

Communication and language development is about more than talking. It means all the different ways a child understands and communicates, only part of which are spoken words.

Communication and language development is important, because speaking is an indicator of fine motor skill development and a reflection of cognitive development.

Reading is one of the best ways to encourage communication and language development. As an infant, hearing words and seeing pictures helps a child understand the two are connected. This lays a foundation for speech, which begins around nine months and typically increases as a child grows.

Here are a few ideas to encourage communication and language development at different ages:

Birth:

Talk to your infant in a calm, soft voice. Sing songs about what you're doing.

3 months old:

Talk to and sing to your baby. Repetition helps a child begin to understand words and actions. He/she will begin to babble and coo at this age, and you should respond to his/her sounds.

6 months old:

Start reading books, singing songs and saying rhymes. You can also describe what's going on around you. If your baby babbles, make sure to reply.

9 months old:

Around this time, a baby will start saying simple words. Continue talking through activities, singing and repeat words to encourage understanding.

12 months old:

Speech continues to develop and reading encourages an expanding vocabulary. Keep naming people, places and things you see regularly to boost understanding.

18 months old:

Singing songs and rhymes and matching actions to the words is a fun activity at this age. Create a homemade book of favorite things to read daily and monitor understanding.

2 years old:

At 2, a toddler typically is able to state short sentences and answer simple yes or no questions. Keep reading, and ask him/her to point to different objects in each book.

3 years old:

Ask your child to retell favorite stories and encourage questions. Sing and read.

4 years old:

Encourage language development by asking your child to tell you a story. Write the story down, then have him/her draw pictures to go with the words.

5 years old:

Keep reading a variety of books. Encourage him/her to tell longer stories by asking “what happened next?” Play rhyming games.

For more information on how to encourage and support a child’s development, visit our [Encouraging Healthy Development page](#).