

# Talk Together



helps children  
**communicate**

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Helping babies and young children  
learn skills for talking



# Learning to talk

**Talking, understanding others and knowing what to say are really important skills. They help children make friends, learn and enjoy life to the full.**

Going from babbling baby to talkative toddler seems like a miracle, but your child needs YOU to help make this happen. The information and tips in this leaflet will help. Talking in your home language is important to give your child the best start.

## Babies

Babies communicate with us from birth. Their cries let us know if they are hungry or uncomfortable. They smile and look at us when we are talking. As we talk to them, they start to understand the simple words that we say.

Babies love to play with sounds by “babbling”. Their first words appear at 12 -18 months. They may not sound like adult words, but as you listen you will begin to know what they mean.

## Toddlers

As toddlers grow, so do the number of words that they understand and use. Understanding words happens first, and using these words comes next.

After their first word, toddlers build up to about 100 words that they use one at a time. Next, they listen to you and learn how words link together. They begin to put two words together in small sentences. Later they will use longer sentences.

By three, children may already understand position words like **under** and **near** and questions like **where?** or **what?**

## Young children

Four year olds start to use longer sentences. They will learn and use lots of new words and will talk about what they have done. They will start to ask lots of questions and enjoy listening to what others are saying.

They find some sounds difficult to say, but most adults will understand them. All of these skills help children get ready for school.

Find out more on  
[www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)



# Handy Tips

**Talking and playing with your child is good for them and makes life easier for you. These simple tips will help.**

## Get your child's attention

Face your child or sit down with them. Say their name before you start speaking. Talk about something you can both see in front of you. This helps them to learn what words mean.

## Have fun together

Use actions, sing, make noises and funny faces. Don't be shy, being a bit silly helps get their attention and makes them laugh.

## Comments not questions

Asking lots of questions can feel like it's a test. Make it a conversation. Comment on what they are doing and what is happening.



### **Give them time to think**

Children need more time than adults to think about what they've heard, and to decide what to say back. Give them time to respond, and look at them while you wait.

### **Use simple language**

Keep your sentences short. For example, "Food time now" or "Wow, you're building a tower".

### **Repeat what you say**

It's good to say the same thing over again. Babies and toddlers need to hear words and sentences lots of times to understand them and learn new words.

### **Make it easier for them to listen**

Turning the music, radio or TV off helps children focus on your words.

### **Build on what they say**

Adding one or two words to what they say helps your child onto the next stage of talking. So, if your child says "bus" you say "Yes, big bus".

### **Speak in your home language**

It's important for children to learn their first words and sentences in their home language. Your child will learn in English later, at nursery and school.

### **Make it easier for them to talk**

Dummies can get in the way of talking. Try to keep them just for sleeptimes. Take it out to talk.

### **Show them the right way**

Young children often make mistakes. Show them that you understand, rather than asking them to repeat words correctly. Say the word or sentence again correctly for your child. If they say "Look at the dod", you can say "Yes, it's a dog".

### **Copy what they say**

Repeat back sounds, words and sentences. Whether its "la la" or "Oh, you liked the banana?", it shows you're interested and that sounds and words are important.

# Learning to talk can be difficult

## Some children find talking and listening harder than others.

They might find it hard to understand what words and sentences mean. Some struggle to find the right words and sounds to use and put them in order. These children may need extra help.

If you are worried about your child, talk to people you know and who know your child. The stages in this leaflet will guide you as they are right for most children. Remember, every child is different.

If you're still worried, go with your instinct. Talk to someone who can help, for example a speech and language therapist or your health visitor or GP.

In the meantime, to help get you started, follow the tips in the leaflet. Visit [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk) for more information.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. What you do together can really help your child!

Visit [www.talkingpoint.org.uk/talkinglinks](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/talkinglinks) to find your nearest speech and language therapist, or ask at your local children's centre.



# Useful I CAN resources

I CAN works to help all children develop their speaking and listening skills. We have some great DVDs and activity books that you will find really useful:

## Babbling Babies

A pack of 30 fun activities, beautifully illustrated on durable cards to be played with babies from birth to 18 months old, to support their speech, language and communication development.



## Toddler Talk

A pack of over 30 fun activities beautifully illustrated on durable cards to be played with toddlers from 18 months to 3 years old, to support their speech, language and communication development.



## Chatter Matters

An engaging DVD with ideas to help develop your children's speaking and listening skills, and a karaoke session for the kids to sing along to.



## Ready Steady Talk

A dynamic activity book of great games to help your child get ready for pre-school and beyond.



## The Communication Cookbook

An activity book brimming full of ideas and ingredients essential to children who have just started school.



Order these resources from  
[www.ican.org.uk/resources](http://www.ican.org.uk/resources)

**I CAN is the children's communication charity. We work to help all children develop their speaking and listening skills.**

To find out more about how I CAN supports parents, visit [www.ican.org.uk/parents](http://www.ican.org.uk/parents)

To order more Talk Together booklets go to [www.ican.org.uk/resources](http://www.ican.org.uk/resources)

To get further information from I CAN through our regular newsletter, sign up at [www.ican.org.uk/register](http://www.ican.org.uk/register)

If you want to help I CAN help children, go to [www.ican.org.uk/supportus](http://www.ican.org.uk/supportus)

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