

Verbal Development

What is Verbal Development?

The toddler years are a very exciting time for language development – from your child’s first word to his first sentences to the interesting and funny comments he’ll begin to make about the world. Parents are an important part of this amazing process.

Verbal development is the way in which children begin to both understand and produce language as a form of communication. Verbal development intensifies during a child’s second and third years.

Many parents instinctively help to promote their child’s linguistic development by talking, singing and reading. (This is just the thing to do!) Through these daily interactions, children learn to talk by learning new words, using phrases and sentences, and engaging in conversation.

Why Verbal Development Matters

Verbal development matters because language and communication are critical for social development and learning. Parents make a difference because the home has the largest influence on vocabulary development up until a child finishes second grade.

WORD LEARNING DEPENDS UPON:

- ★ The amount of talking: Your child wants to communicate with you even before she can use words. Parents often wonder how often to talk with their children. The answer is easy: as often as possible!
- ★ The type of talking: Children develop their oral language skills through conversations with others, and will always learn more by talking with real people than by watching television or interacting with other media.

The ability to use language to effectively communicate with others is a key component in a child’s early development, and of course, to her long-term success in school and beyond.



What Parents Can Do

- ★ Keep on talking! This strengthens your connection to your child and gets her started on the path to more complex conversations. Acknowledge her effort by looking at her and/or providing a comment or question.
- ★ Research shows that children whose parents talk more tend to have larger vocabularies. Additionally, use a rich vocabulary when you talk about the world around you.



- ★ Follow your child's lead and respond to his interests. Use his focus as an opportunity to build language skills. Add details to the words he already knows.
- ★ Don't expect perfect speech from your toddler...or even your 5-year-old. Learning how to make sounds correctly takes time. Young children learn language by listening to those around them. Rather than correcting a misspoken idea, simply say it the correct way and she will eventually learn.
- ★ To help build vocabulary, describe objects with lots of details. But use short sentences!
- ★ Use questions and elaborate when talking with your child. Answer her questions too, and engage her in conversation.
- ★ Reading to your child can expose him to a wide range of sounds and words. Find books that you both think are fun, and stop before he gets bored. Read the words or look at the pictures to introduce new words and spark conversation.
- ★ Turn off the television. Children learn language best when they interact with a live person, not a TV or computer.
- ★ If you're concerned that your child has difficulty with speech, talk to your child's healthcare provider.