



Learning to speak, read, write and communicate well begins at birth. Here's what you can do to build your children's language and literacy skills in fun everyday activities.

Talking and Listening Together

Tip Sheet #2

Why?

We know that the more language children hear as babies and toddlers, the larger their vocabularies will be in their preschool years and beyond. Children who know and use a lot of words will have more success in learning to read and write.

Starting at Birth:

Talk with your baby all day long. During bath time, mealtime, diapering or on a walk, point and talk about what you are doing. (*"Let's wash your tummy with water and soap. Water is wet!"*)

Be animated. Attract his attention and make sure he can see your face.

Take turns with your baby. When he babbles and coos, copy his sounds and actions and wait for him to imitate you.

Talk as if your baby can talk to you. Put simple words to his sounds and actions and wait to see what he does. (When he puts his arms out to you, pick him up and say, *"Up, you want up"*.)

Additional Tips for Toddlers and Preschoolers:

Take turns... and wait. Talk about anything your child seems interested in. Say one thing then wait for your child to take his turn. Stay face-to-face while talking.

Join in pretend play. Encourage your child to talk and imagine during pretend play.

Use a variety of words. Try using **action** words (running, leap), **describing** words (cold, upset), **location** words (on,

over, up), **how** words (softly, quickly), and **quantity** words (more, less, some).

Add words to what your child says. If he says, *"Mommy go?"* You can say, *"Yes, Mommy is going to work now."*)

Tell stories. Tell made-up and family stories and encourage your child to join in the storytelling. Talk about where, when, how and what happens first, next, and last.

Additional Tips for Kindergarten Children:

Expand. Give your child additional information when talking to him to expand on his understanding of how the world works.

Describe and predict. Encourage your child to use language to describe, to predict what will happen next, to share an opinion, to question, to talk about the past.

Plan. Talk about your daily schedule or planning activities that have a sequence. For example, *"Let's plan your birthday party, what do we need to do first?"*

Learning More than One Language

Communicate, read to and teach your child in the language you speak best (Mom speaks French and Dad speaks English). Strong first language skills make it easier for children to learn another language.

Find ways to expose your child to the language(s) you want them to learn (attend playgroups, community or library programs, provide CDs and books).