

# Helping My 18-month to 2.5-year-old to Talk

## 1. Play with your child

Three types of play:

- People Play – These are games and songs that don't require toys, but rather interaction with people. Examples include
  - Nursery rhymes e.g. Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
  - Chasey
  - Peek-a-boo
  - Tickle
- Toy Play
- Pretend Play. At this age, they will need physical items to pretend with. They typically will use items that look like what they are intended for e.g. they will require a cup to pretend to drink tea, they won't be able to pretend that they have an invisible tea cup in their hand.

Things to remember in play:

- Follow their lead in play and join in (they might be playing with something in a way that you wouldn't have necessarily thought to play with it e.g. using a wooden hammer as a brush for a doll, but that's ok)
- Be face to face – make sure you get on the floor and eye-to-eye and make sure you are able to see their face and they are able to see yours (especially your mouth).
- Copy what they do and make comments
- Whilst you follow their lead, you can incorporate new things in to their play routine that are relevant. For example, they may be playing with cars pushing them on the floor. You can add a set of traffic lights for them to stop and start at. Or they may be playing with a toy animal; wash them in a small bath. When you are teaching your child new things in play follow these principles:
  - Repeat the new step to the play routine
  - Use words to talk about the steps to play (look at the section on modelling)
  - Give them time to copy your model (wait and look expectantly)
  - If they don't copy you, you may need to cue them e.g. talk about what you did or help them do it by guiding them hand over hand
  - Keep the play interaction going for as long as possible by introducing new toys to the play, following their lead
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## 2. Ask Questions to stimulate language

Matching

Source of noise

Naming objects

Naming people

Naming actions

Imitation

Remembering objects in book

Remembering seen/done

e.g. Find one like this

e.g. What can you hear?

e.g. What is it?

e.g. Who is that?

e.g. What are you doing?

e.g. Say this

e.g. What did you see?

e.g. What did you see/do?

### 3. Model the Language – Face to Face & One-step Up (and no more)

- If they are not using any words, use single word phrases; if they are using single word phrases, use two-word phrases. Keep the words simple and easy for them to copy (short words).
- Stress the words you want them to say by saying them louder and slower. For example, if they pick up their shoe and say shoe as you go to put it on, you might say “shoe **on**” emphasising the word that they aren’t saying yet.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. When ever you give a model of something you want them to say, try and repeat it up to 8 times in that one interaction.

### 4. Leave out Language & Expect Them to Fill the Gap

- Whether it’s when you are reading a favourite book for the 10<sup>th</sup> time or playing a frequently played game, or singing a loved nursery rhyme, if there is a phrase that is repeated, your child will learn it. Use this as an opportunity to stimulate it’s use. For example, you might be singing “Twinkle twinkle little star”. After singing it through a few times, start to leave off the last word in the phrase (i.e. star) and wait and look at them expectantly for them to say it (if they don’t say it after you have waited 5-10 seconds, you model the answer by saying it). Or perhaps you are reading a simple book that has one or two words per page. You see an apple and you say “a...” and look at them expectantly for them to say the rest of the word.

### 5. Give your Child a Reason to Talk

- Put items (toys, foods) that are frequently wanted in view, but out of reach so that they have to request them.
- Give things to them in a piecemeal fashion e.g. If they asked for some water by pointing to the water, give them a very tiny amount in a cup while modelling the request (e.g. “water” or “want water”) and then wait for them to request more. Continue to model it and wait with an expectant look as if they will verbally request.
- Present choices. For example, if they ask for food, you show them two choices and ask which one they would like while verbally modelling what the verbal request would sound like “cookie” “apple”
- Wait expectantly! This is the key for a lot of your interactions. When you modelled what is to be said, you should always wait expectantly – sometimes for up to 5 or 10 seconds. Pause in what you are doing, look at them as if you are expecting them to talk. Model again if necessary. This gives a reason for a child to try to copy your model.

### 6. Turn off ALL devices and read!

No matter what the device is or what they are watching (ABC kids or something else deemed ‘educational’), no child is going to develop communication skills without a communication partner!! If you want your child to talk, you need to talk with them. Reading also exposes them to a lot more language than you would often use in your day to day routines. When you read to them and introduce that new language, it will be MUCH more effective than any media program could ever be!

### Tips on Choosing Books for this Age

- Make sure they are sturdy and can carry them
- Have books that have things that would be familiar to them – objects or events (e.g. toys, animals or children doing familiar things such as sleeping, eating)

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- Chose books that have interaction – things of different texture, noises, flaps, mirrors
  - Two to three words per page maximum
  - Simple rhymes and repeated words and predictability
  - Social interaction is encouraged e.g. hello or good-bye

### **Tips on Making Books Fun for this Age**

- Sit with them on your lap in front of a mirror so they can also watch your face
- Make different facial expressions, change the pitch and loudness of you voice
- Bump them up and down or rock them from side-to-side on your lap with the rhythm of the words; clap their hands with yours with the rhythm of the words
- Keep books in easy reach

