

# Your 3 Year Old!

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments



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## 3 year old children have an **EXPLOSION** of language!

Amazing changes are happening in your child's speech and language development. Your 3 year old has an explosion of language learning. She uses more words than you can possibly count and seems to learn new words every day.

Your 3 year old now has conversations with you. She uses at least 3 to 4 words together in sentences. She talks about what she sees, how she feels, what has happened in the past, and what she wants to do next. She answers your questions and asks questions of her own. She wants to know about everything. She seems to be constantly asking, "Why?"

### Everyday and everyway - How children learn language

Your child learns language every day. He learns about his world by seeing, touching, listening, tasting, and doing. Any activity you do together is a chance to learn. Speak, sing, and talk about books with your child in your language.

As a parent, you play a major role in your child's learning. You are already doing many things with your child. It makes a difference how you talk with and respond to your child during these times. Use everyday activities to build your child's language.



Use activities like bath time, bedtime, eating, dressing, driving, shopping, walking to the mailbox, going to the park, playing, and cleaning up. Talk about what is happening and use words and ideas that go along with these activities.

## Everyday tips - How parents make the difference!

Turn everyday moments into language-rich activities. Try these tips in your language.



### When talking...

- **Repeat what your child says, using the correct words or sounds.** You don't have to make her correct it. If your child says, "Him want to go to de tore" you can say, "You're right, **he** wants to go to **the store**."
- **Add new words and ideas to what she says.** Use different words that mean the same thing. *Big* can be *huge*, *large*, or *gigantic*. Say these new words a little bit louder - "That is a **huge** butterfly on the flower" or "That butterfly is **huge**."
- **Ask questions that get your child to say more than 1 or 2 word answers.** Ask, "What's she going to do?" or "Why is he going there?" instead of "Is she going to bed?" or "He doesn't want to go to bed, does he?"



### When playing...

- **Let your child be the leader.** Let him play however he likes. Join in and play. Talk about what he is doing or what he is interested in doing.
- **Play face to face with your child.** Sit on the floor, lie on your stomach, or bend down low.
- **Don't ask too many questions.** Make more comments. Talk about what you and your child are doing. Wait a few seconds for him to answer.



### When reading...

Reading and language go together. Reading helps with learning language. Good language skills help with learning to read and write. All of these skills are important for school.

- **Read books everyday.** Your child likes to hear the same books over and over.
- **Make up your own story** to go with the pictures.
- **Take turns** reading a page at a time. Get your child to tell you the story in her own words.
- **Wait and let her finish a sentence** in a familiar story.
- **Cut out pictures** from magazines and flyers and make up your own stories.

Playing together is a great time to encourage language.





Want more information on speech and language? Read the Talk Box Resource List.

### When singing...

- **Make up songs** about what you are doing. Use tunes from songs you already know.
- **Sing slowly** so your child can hear all the words and sing along.
- **Use actions** to go with the songs.
- If you use another language at home, sing songs in that language too.



### For more ideas, go to...

- [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)
- [www.playingforkeeps.org](http://www.playingforkeeps.org)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/)
- [www.wondertime.go.com](http://www.wondertime.go.com)

## Activities to try...

### Children learn by doing!

- Let your child help with cooking. Talk about what you are doing. Say, "Stir, stir" or "Pour the water in."
- Plant flowers together. Talk about what you need - a shovel, dirt, a pot, and water. Talk about the order of what happens, "**First** we put the dirt in ..." Describe how the dirt *feels*. After you're finished, talk about what you did. Have your child tell someone else what you did together.
- Ask your child what comes next when you are making a sandwich. "**First** we put the peanut butter on. What comes next?"
- When you are driving to a new place, ask your child what he thinks he is going to do there.

Use unusual activities to teach new words and ideas. These may include wrapping a present, going to the dentist or doctor, going to the zoo or a farm, seeing a worm crawling on the side walk, seeing a broken window or spilled juice, or cooking Thanksgiving dinner.

**Check out this month's activity sheet for more ideas.**

## What to expect

### By 3 years your child should...

- Use at least 3 to 4 words together, like *I want more juice* and *Mommy is at work*.
- Understand and ask questions, like *Where is your coat?*, *Who's that?*, and *What is soap for?*
- Describe activities, feelings, problems, and tell simple stories.
- Put sounds at the beginning of words, like *bus* instead of *us* and at the ending of words, like *boat* instead of *boa*.
- Speak clearly. Parents understand their child most of the time.

3 year olds use sounds like *m, p, b, w, t, d, n, h, k, g, f, s*, vowels, *y* as in *yes*, and *ing* as in *sing*.

### By 4 years your child should...

- Use sentences that are longer and more complete, like *I want to go out and play on the swing*.
- Use more grammar, like plurals (*boats*), possessives (*daddy's hat*), pronouns (*I, you, me, she, he, we*), past tense (*walked*), and some question words (*what, who, where, why*). There are still some errors.
- Understand most concept words (*colour, shapes, locations, texture, time*).
- Speak clearly. Parents and others understand your child all of the time.

**Ask about the *Speech Sounds and Talking and Listening* checklists to get more information about development.**

## When to get help

You should be concerned if your child...

- Is not saying or understanding what is expected for his age.
- Is not using many different words or sentences.
- Is not interacting with you or other children.
- Is not easily understood when talking or gets frustrated.

## Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. To find one in your area...

- Contact your local health unit
- Call Health Link Alberta:
  - Calgary area: 403-943-LINK (5465)
  - Edmonton area: 780-408-LINK (5465)
  - Toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- Go to [www.healthlinkalberta.ca](http://www.healthlinkalberta.ca)



Go to [www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca) for more Talk Box ideas.

It is never too early to help  
your child with speech  
and language development.