

First Words: Encouraging Language Development in Toddlers

Hearing your toddler say “Ammi” or “Paani” is pure joy! Between 1–3 years, language skills explode, and you can help them grow. Here’s how Pakistani parents can boost their toddler’s first words.

Why Language Matters

Early language skills lay the foundation for reading, social skills, and emotional expression. By age 2, most toddlers say 200–300 words and start forming 2-word phrases like “More milk.”

Ways to Encourage Talking

1. **Talk all day:** Narrate your actions: “Ammi’s cutting sabzi!” or “Let’s wear blue jooti.” Use simple, clear words.
2. **Read together:** Share Urdu or English board books with bright pictures. Point to objects and name them. Ask, “Where’s the cat?”
3. **Sing songs:** Nursery rhymes like “Twinkle Twinkle” or desi lullabies teach rhythm and words. Clap along for fun.
4. **Repeat and expand:** If they say “Dog,” say, “Yes, big brown dog!” This models new words.
5. **Play with sounds:** Make animal noises (meow, woof) or car sounds (vroom). It’s fun and builds speech muscles.
6. **Limit screen time:** Too much TV can delay language. Aim for under 1 hour daily and co-watch to talk about what’s on.
7. **Encourage gestures:** Teach signs like waving or pointing. It bridges to verbal communication.

Pakistani Context

- **Bilingual homes:** Speaking Urdu, Punjabi, or Pashto at home is great! Kids can learn multiple languages at once. Use one language per parent if possible.
- **Desi storytelling:** Share tales of Anarkali or Heer Ranjha in simple words to spark imagination.
- **Family chatter:** Involve Nanu or Chachu in conversations. More voices mean more learning.

Milestones to Watch

- **12 months:** Says 1–2 words (mama, dada).
- **18 months:** 10–20 words, points to objects.

- **2 years:** 200+ words, 2-word phrases.
- **3 years:** Short sentences, understandable to strangers.

When to Worry

If by 18 months they don't say any words, don't respond to their name, or stop using words they knew, consult a pediatrician or speech therapist. Early intervention helps.

Your toddler's first words are a window into their world. Keep talking, singing, and reading, and they'll be chattering away in no time!