



12 to 24 months: how to help your child's communication

Just like when they were a baby, your toddler's communication will thrive through your spending time with them. It is important that you continue to tune into their facial expressions and sounds.

Show interest in what they are doing and respond to them by:

- describing your daily activities together, for example "that's the car" and "we're changing your nappy"
- adding words to your toddler's sentences, for example if they say "kick ball" you could say "yes, mammy is kicking the ball" – this helps them to use longer sentences when they are ready

Use actions with your words

Using actions with your words makes it easier for your toddler to understand your words. It also gives them more ways to communicate with you.

Examples of actions you can use:

- wave when you say "bye bye"
- shake your head when you say "no"
- show size with your hands when you say "big" or "small"
- lift your arms up when you say "up"

Make sure to use the same action with the same word each time.

Give "it" a name

Instead of saying "there it is", you could say "there's the ball" or "there's the bubble". This will help them to become familiar with a range of specific words.

Speak slowly and clearly

When talking with your toddler, speak slowly and clearly, so that they have the best opportunity to hear the sounds at the beginning, middle and end of the words. This will help to develop their speech sounds.

Stay calm when they're being challenging

Staying calm will help your toddler to learn how to deal with emotions and emotions. It also encourages good self-esteem and sets a strong foundation for their growing communication and later speech and language development.

Temper tantrums (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/parenting-advice/caring-for-a-child/temper-tantrums/>)

Watch a video on connecting and communicating with your baby

Use words to describe your toddler's feelings

Name the emotions your toddler is experiencing, for example, happy, excited, sad or upset. This gives your child the words to understand and talk about their own and others' feelings. This is very important for your child's emotional awareness and development.

Limit screen time

Screens can be smartphones, gaming devices, tablets, computers and televisions. Try to limit screen time to under one hour per day for 18 to 24 month olds. It is not recommended for children under 18 months to have any screen time.

Watching too much on screens can take time away from special interactions with your toddler that are important for speech and language development.

Screen time and young children (Link: <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/play/screen-time/>)

Limit soothers

Try to limit your toddler's use of soothers, especially when they are awake. Soothers can lead to difficulties with their teeth and speech.

Activities to try

Ideas to help your toddler's communication include:

Action songs and nursery rhymes

Sing action songs and nursery rhymes with your toddler. Repeat the same songs and go slowly, so that your toddler can become familiar with the rhythm.

"This little piggy went to the market..." is a fun rhyme to sing during nappy change or after bath time. When your toddler starts using their first words, try leaving out the last word of the rhyme for your toddler to say, for example: "They all fall..."

Books

Most toddlers enjoy books with simple stories or about their favourite characters. Encourage them to join in for repetitive lines of the story. It is best to follow your toddler's interest in the book – this may involve describing the pictures instead of reading the story.

Floor play

Play on the floor with your toddler, they can learn so much language through play.

Watch a video on playing your child's way

Following your child's lead in play is a great way to help their communication development.

Other games

Your toddler might enjoy imaginary games, jigsaws, painting and much more. These games allow you to interact and talk with them and to support their growing speech and language development.

Find videos on helping your child to communicate (Link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsQK32cdMW_ygwiXLtlu11owvqX8HctB)

Speaking more than one language at home

Many children grow up in a family where more than one language is spoken every day. Young children adapt very well and pick up different languages quickly.

The important thing is to speak to your child in the language that you feel at ease with. This might mean you use one language and your partner uses another language when you talk with your child.

More in Communication development (Link: </babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/>)

0 to 12 months (Link: </babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/0-12-months/>)

12 to 24 months: how to help your child's communication

2 to 5 years (Link: </babies-children/checks-milestones/communication-development/communication-development-2-5-years/>)

Screen time and young children (Link: </babies-children/play/screen-time/>)

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