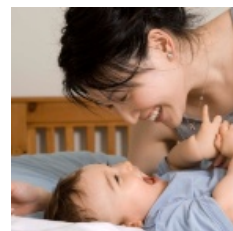




## Language Development: 2 Year Olds

Your two-year-old not only understands most of what you say to him, but also speaks with a rapidly growing vocabulary of fifty or more words. Over the course of this year, he'll graduate from two- or three-word sentences ("Drink juice," "Mommy want cookie") to those with four, five, or even six words ("Where's the ball, Daddy?" "Dolly sit in my lap"). He's also beginning to use pronouns (I, you, me, we, they) and understands the concept of "mine" ("I want my cup," "I see my mommy"). Pay attention to how he also is using language to describe ideas and information and to express his physical or emotional needs and desires.



It's human nature to measure your toddler's verbal abilities against those of other children his age, but you should try to avoid this. At this time, there's more variation in language development than in any other area. While some preschoolers develop language skills at a steady rate, others seem to master words in an uneven manner. And some children are naturally more talkative than others. This doesn't mean that the more verbal children are necessarily smarter or more advanced than the quieter ones, nor does it even mean that they have richer vocabularies. In fact, the quiet child may know just as many words but be choosier about speaking them. As a general rule, boys start talking later than girls, but this variation—like most others mentioned above—tends to even out as children reach school age.

Without any formal instruction, just by listening and practicing, your child will master many of the basic rules of grammar by the time she enters school. You can help enrich his vocabulary and language skills by making reading a part of your everyday routine. At this age, he can follow a story line and will understand and remember many ideas and pieces of information presented in books. Even so, because he may have a hard time sitting still for too long, the books you read to him should be short. To keep his attention, choose activity-oriented books that encourage him to touch, point, and name objects or to repeat certain phrases. Toward the end of this year, as his language skills become more advanced, he'll also have fun with poems, puns, or jokes that play with language by repeating funny sounds or using nonsense phrases.

For some children, however, this language-development process does not run smoothly. In fact, about one in every ten to fifteen children has trouble with language comprehension and/or speech. For some children, the problem is caused by hearing difficulty, low intelligence, lack of verbal stimulation at home, or a family history of speech delays. In most cases, though, the cause is unknown. If your pediatrician suspects your child has difficulty with language, he'll conduct a thorough physical exam and hearing test and, if necessary, refer you to a speech/language or early-childhood specialist for further evaluation. Early detection and identification of language delay or hearing impairment is critically important, so treatment can begin before the problem interferes with learning in other areas. Unless you and your pediatrician identify the difficulty and do something about it, your child may have continuous trouble with classroom learning.

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