

## Tip Sheets

### Toddlers: Strategies for Supporting the Development of Communication Skills



#### Toddlers: It's all about... "Do it again"!

In the same way that talking, reading, and singing to infants on a daily basis promotes the development of speech and language skills, these daily practices also provide toddlers

with important learning experiences. These activities promote brain development and the development of skills in:

- Language
- Math
- Reading
- Ability to successfully interact with others

Remember that toddlers like to repeat words and activities. This repetition helps to strengthen connections in the brain as they practice and master new skills.

#### Responsive Interactions

- Talk about what you and the toddlers see everywhere that you go.
- Point to and name people, animals, toys, objects, activities, etc.
- Respond to pointing/other gestures toddlers make by naming, labeling, and describing.
- Ask older toddlers what they are pointing at, and allow time for them to respond.
- Provide opportunities for toddlers to make choices.
- Encourage toddlers to learn to ask for help.
- Provide opportunities and encourage use of speech and language as toddlers interact with one another and practice social skills.

#### Using the Environment and Routines

- Provide props so that children can act out daily routines and stories.
- Introduce new words by providing simple, child-friendly definitions and examples related to daily life. Encourage children to think of an example themselves. Use these new words in daily conversations with the child.
- Play "I Spy" with older toddlers.
- Point out shapes of foods on plate and in other areas of the environment.
- Provide sensory experiences with sand and/or water to enable use of words such as *empty*, *full*, *in*, *out*, *sink*, *float*, etc.
- Display pictures of children, family members, and caregivers at children's eye level to promote interest and communication.
- Provide dramatic play props so toddlers can begin to act out stories and practice the use of the speech and language skills.
- Avoid the use of television and other forms of media with children 2 years and under (AAP, 2011). Exposure to language by way of media differs from exposure to language through interacting socially.

#### Reading and Exploring Books

- Read books on a daily basis.
- Educate parents on the importance of reading aloud to children.
- When reading point to pictures, letters, and numbers.
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.

- Let children turn the pages as you read a book. It is okay if they skip pages!
- As a toddler holds a book, ask him to point to specific pictures.
- Introduce stories that highlight the use of prepositions such as up/down, big/little, colors, numbers, shapes, and the alphabet.
- Share books that can be sung. Check out the following link for some great ideas:  
[http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/887.Sing\\_Along\\_Picture\\_Books\\_for\\_Toddlers](http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/887.Sing_Along_Picture_Books_for_Toddlers)
- \*Remember that the Children’s Librarian at your local library is a resource to treasure. Most will be happy to help you gather books to use with the children in your program.

### Songs, Rhymes, and Finger-Plays

- Sing simple and repetitive songs during daily routines and activities.
- Sing songs with basic rhyming and/or counting patterns such as “One, two buckle my shoe.”
- Play singing games by making new words to a familiar tune.
- Teach simple finger-plays and songs with actions.

### Early Literacy Activities

- Provide markers and crayons to experiment with to older toddlers.
- Invite toddlers to watch and “help” make lists. This introduces them to the concept that spoken language is related to the written word.

### Additional Resources

Talking is Teaching

<http://talkingisteaching.org>

Too Small to Fail

<http://toosmall.org/community/resources>

Zero to Three

<http://www.zerotothree.org>

For more information, visit [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org).

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*Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.*

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