



Conversations Count

One of the best things you can do to support your child’s learning is to have conversations with him throughout the day. Talking is a natural part of many of the activities you do together—from picking out clothes in the morning to reading aloud at bedtime.

As you talk with your child, you are teaching him how language works. You are also introducing him to new words and new ideas about the world around him. Having meaningful conversations with your child is a way to express your love and to support your relationship.

- Model big new words as you and your child go through the day. Describe your activities: *Here we are at the **pediatrician’s** office—just in time for our **appointment**.* Or talk about the things you see: *Look at that **enormous** tree!* Be sure to respond to your child’s comments as well.
- Encourage your child to express her ideas and opinions. Listen for any questions she might have and the things she wonders about. Then discuss them with her and together make a plan to find out more about these topics.
- Model language and encourage conversations by thinking out loud during your daily routines. For example, as you cook dinner you might talk about what ingredients you are using or what steps you will take in preparing the salad.
- Recall shared experiences with your child. As you tuck her into bed, talk about the rain that fell in the morning or about the friend she met at the park. Ask her to share her memories of the day, her favorite activity, or a difficult moment. Be sure to respond to her comments.
- Encourage your child to listen and ask questions during family conversations. Pass a “talking spoon” around the dinner table. Whoever is holding the spoon shares something he did that day while everyone else listens. When the speaker is done, each person asks him a question. Then the spoon is passed to the next person.
- Use full sentences and introduce descriptive words to your child. Just because your child is little doesn’t mean you have to limit yourself to simple words and short sentences. If your child asks for a tomato on her sandwich, try asking her if she wants an enormous, vibrant red tomato or a tiny, emerald green tomato.
- Ask family members and friends to speak with your child in the languages they feel most comfortable using. Being exposed to many different languages helps your child develop listening skills and an appreciation of ways people are the same and different.
- Encourage family members and caregivers to converse with your child using lots of descriptive language and new words.