

Toddlers who are cared for in language-rich environments with plenty of adult attention learn an average of nine new words a day. Even though they might not yet be talking, they are collecting and storing words and learning their meanings. They need caregivers who talk to them and interact with them, sing, tell rhymes and fingerplays, and read to them. This not only encourages bonding and positive social interactions, but it also lays the groundwork for learning to read and write and for later school success.

You can encourage their language development by:

- ◆ Pointing to things and describing them: “There’s the kitty-cat walking by the window!”
- ◆ Using words to describe what the children may be experiencing: “Who’s that coming up the walk? Is that mama?” “Look, there’s a baby in that mirror!”
- ◆ Identifying their emotions: “Oh, you want your

mommy. You do not want her to leave.” “You love your stuffed animal so much!”

- ◆ Explaining what the child is doing: “You are running to get the ball, aren’t you?”
- ◆ Providing vocabulary as they explore: “You have a big red ball. Oops, it rolled under the table.”
- ◆ Reading picture books with them and asking them to recall details (books should be a part of their daily routines)
- ◆ Repeating favorite stories and rhymes to them
- ◆ Talking with them on a one-to-one basis and actively listening and responding to what they have to say, and
- ◆ Building their confidence: “You did that all by yourself.”

The following charts will serve as a guide to help you meet the program requirements for infants and toddlers in your care:

Infant/Toddler Program Developmental Highlights:

Adapted from Children’s Home Society of California

Birth to 6 months

What I may do

Follow movement and sounds with my eyes and by turning my head.

Make eye contact with you.

React to loud noises.

Like to put objects in my mouth.

Make sounds like ahh and ooh.

Cry to tell you I need something. I may be hungry, hurting, or wet.

Look/turn away from you or cry when I need a break from an activity.

Lift my head while lying on my stomach.

Kick my legs and move my arms.

Roll over from my stomach to my back.

Move an object from one hand to the other.

Smile and laugh.

Sleep a lot.

How you can help

Move objects slowly in front of me so that I can follow them with my head and eyes.

Keep me away from loud noises.

Do not throw me in the air or shake me.

Stroke my head and skin.

Softly talk and sing to me.

Show me books with large, colorful pictures and different textures.

Keep my head from sliding around. My neck muscles are weak.

Give me safe toys like plastic/rubber rings, rattles, or soft objects.

Make eye contact with me and smile a lot.

Change my diaper as soon as it is wet or dirty.

To quiet me down, gently pat my back, hold/rock/walk me, and use a soft voice.

6 to 12 months

What I may do

Copy sounds and movements that you make.
 Recognize you from strangers.
 Repeat actions over and over again to help me learn.
 Respond to my name.
 Make vowel sounds like aah-aah or ooh-ooh and other sounds like bbbb, dada, gaga, or mama.
 Understand what "no" means. (But I may not follow your instructions.)
 Hold objects with my hands.
 Reach for objects in front of me.
 Roll over from my back to my stomach.
 Keep my head up and sit without support.
 Move around on my stomach or crawl.
 Pull myself up onto things.
 Move objects in and out of a container.
 Drink from a cup and begin to eat solid foods with your help.

How you can help

Play games like "Pat-a-Cake" and "Peek-a-Boo."
 Give me safe objects and toys that make sounds.
 Read books with large, colorful pictures and different textures.
 As I learn to communicate and show you what I like and dislike, respond to the sounds and body movements that I make.
 Sing or play songs that have a lot of repetition.
 Give me room to move my arms, body, hands, and legs.
 Keep objects that I can choke on away from my reach.
 Give me safe toys that I can bite, bang, shake, or throw like blocks and cups.
 Help me comfort myself with my favorite blanket, music, or stuffed animal.

12 to 18 months

What I may do

Begin to think of ways to solve problems.
 Have a short attention span.
 Remember things that happened hours or a day ago.
 Follow simple instructions.
 Say 10-15 words.
 Respond to a question like "Where is the ball?" by pointing.
 Cry, hit, or have a tantrum when I am frustrated.
 Walk without support, but I may crawl sometimes.
 Stack one object on top of another.
 Turn a page in a book.
 Get upset when I am apart from you.
 Drink from a cup by myself, but I may spill.
 Do things you have told me not to do.

How you can help

Encourage me to practice carrying, climbing, pulling, and pushing.
 Take walks with me.
 Speak slowly to me face-to-face.
 Talk to me about what I feel, hear, see, smell and taste.
 Play hide-and-peek and finger games with me like "Itsy Bitsy Spider."
 Repeat my favorite books, rhymes, songs, and stories.
 When I am frustrated, encourage me to use words.
 Praise me with phrases like "Good job!" or "You're working so hard!"
 Provide board books.
 Make sure I get enough rest.
 Offer choices to me.
 Be patient with me. Remember that spills and mistakes are learning experiences, too.

18 to 24 months

What I may do

- Be able to name and point to body parts.
- Be able to make sounds that animals make.
- Say two-word sentences like "Hold me!"
- Use words that focus on myself like "I, me, and mine."
- Say 15-50 words and use new words every month.
- Climb, jump, run, and walk.
- Walk up and down stairs with your help.
- Begin to drink with a cup instead of a bottle.
- Not like to share.
- Help you with dressing and undressing me.

How you can help

- Give me toys that I can play "pretend" with like plastic food and telephones without cords.
- Read to me and encourage me to find objects in the pictures.
- Help me put my feelings into words.
- Talk to me about what I'm doing as I do it.
For example: "You're rolling the ball."
- Provide safe areas indoors and outdoors for me to move around.
- Give me large crayons to scribble.
- Give me toys that I can pour, scoop, squeeze, and stack.
- Keep your eye on me because I may wander away.
- Make available two of the same objects so that I don't have to share.
- Help me eat with a spoon and drink with a straw.

24 to 36 months

What I may do

- Copy your words and actions.
- Be able to say my age.
- Show an interest in using the toilet.
- Match objects by shape and color.
- Talk to myself to practice new words.
- Ask "Why?" a lot.
- Have many tantrums because I am frustrated.
- Use three-word sentences like "Mommy hold me!"
- Say about 50-300 words and have better pronunciation.
- Walk up and down stairs using one foot (instead of both feet) for each stair.
- Like to use one hand more than the other.
- Be able to open doors.
- Show an interest in other children.
- Know if I am a boy or a girl.

How you can help

- Give me four-piece puzzles and musical instruments to play with.
- Watch me to see what I like and do not like. I may refuse many foods.
- Sing the alphabet song and read books with colors and shapes.
- Ask me about things that happened in the past like "Who gave you that toy?"
- Read to me.
- Ask me questions when I play like "What are you doing?"
- Kick and throw balls with me.
- Give me beads (1 1/2" wide) to put on a string.
Make sure I don't swallow them!
- Give me opportunities to play with other children.
- Keep objects you do not want me to touch away from my reach.
- Help me do things by myself like buttoning.