

Top Talking Tips for Parents Early Years

✓
Allow your child to take the lead when you play together – this will keep them motivated and they'll develop crucial thinking and language skills through their play.

✓
Give your child time – they might need more time than you think to answer questions or follow instructions, so give them an extra few seconds to do this.

✓
Younger children might find it difficult to tell you about their day at school. To support them, try giving choices like “did you paint a picture or play on the swings?” or ask “tell me one good thing that happened today”. You could say one good thing about your day too, just to get the conversation going.

✓
Share books together – interactive books with flaps or different textures are really great.

✓
Think about matching the language you use to the language level of your child – try not to use vocabulary or sentence structures that are far more complex than the ones that they are using.

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✓
Think about your non-verbal communication – your facial expressions, body language and tone of voice are great ways of showing your child that you're interested in what they say as well as helping them to keep their interest.

✓
Demonstrate rather than correct. If your child says something incorrectly, repeat what they've said, but in the correct way and try to keep it in the conversation. You can do this with individual words, e.g. if they say "tat" you can repeat "ah, you saw a ...cat", or sentences e.g. if they say "dog runned" you can say, "yes, the dog ran, didn't it."

✓
Encourage turn taking during games, you can make it clear what you're doing by explaining "my turn now" and telling your child when they've done well at waiting for their turn.

✓
Think out loud– talk to your child about what you're doing and when you're doing it, that way they will begin to match what they hear to the object or the action that you're talking about.

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✓
Silence is ok! If you allow your child some space and time, you might be surprised with what they say.

✓
Repeat and expand on what your child says – e.g. if your child says “mummy car” you could say “mummy’s driving the car” – this helps children learn how to put words together to make sentences they can understand and then use them.

✓
Use rhymes and singing – sing your child’s favourite nursery rhyme with them. Try to sing it slowly to help your child listen to the words of the rhyme. If you can use actions too, this will help your child to understand the words better.

✓
Use repetition; children need to hear words several times in different situations before they can understand and then use them.

✓
Try setting aside some specific talking time, with the TV off, just for talking and playing together.