



## Help your child: words and language

**Good communication skills will give your child the best start in life and help them when they start school.**

The foundation for a child's communication skills starts early. Did you know that 75% of brain development occurs in the first two years of life? As a parent, there is lots you can do to stimulate and develop their communication skills at this vital time.

Singing, rhymes, and musical activities are all great ways to help babies and toddlers learn to talk. Even babies will quickly learn to recognise rhymes and know what comes next, giving them confidence to join in and a sense of participation. Practice the songs and rhymes you learn at toddler group when you're at home.

Playing with your child is important in developing their communication skills. Give them time to respond when you ask questions. Encourage them to try out simple verbal sounds such as

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cars, sheep, doorbells. As you play with them, teach them new words. You can make the most of your time at toddler group by talking to them about all the activities. Always respond in some way; for example, if your child says 'ball', you could say 'Yes, a red ball'.

Encouraging a love of books will really help your child when they start school. Even the littlest children can learn how to turn the pages gently, and see how we read from front to back and left to right. Stories with repetition are great as they will allow a child to join in, and non-fiction books will open their eyes to new things in the world around us. Sitting down regularly with your children to read stories will develop emotional bonds with you, as well as a love of reading.

If your toddler group has a storytime, this can help your child to listen and concentrate. But telling stories to wriggly young children can be challenging for storytellers! Help the children to enjoy it by listening attentively yourself, and talk to them afterwards about the story.

Not everyone finds reading easy, but there are lots of schemes around to help adult readers. These will really help you to help your child. Call Learndirect on 0800 101901 to find out about courses in your area. If you need to, practice reading your child's storybook alone before you read it to them.

The Bookstart trust aims to give every child in the UK three gifts of books before they start school. If your child hasn't received theirs, ask your toddler group leader or local library about this. And do visit your local library where you can borrow books free.

### Useful links

[www.readtogether.co.uk](http://www.readtogether.co.uk)  
[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

Care for the Family, Garth House  
Leon Avenue, Cardiff CF15 7RG  
Tel: (029) 2081 0800  
[www.careforthefamily.org.uk](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)

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Care for the Family is a charity registered in England and Wales  
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### Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

The information in this handout is supplied in good faith, but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations or websites.