



Learning To Talk

Learning to talk is a process that starts at birth, when your baby experiences how voices sound. Parents can encourage their baby's ability to communicate.

From birth to three months, your baby listens to your voice. Your baby coos and gurgles and tries to make the same sounds you make.

- Sing to your baby, starting before baby is born.
- Talk to your baby. Your baby will not understand the words, but will like your voice and your smile.
- Plan for quiet time. Babies need time to babble and play quietly without other noises.

From three to six months, your baby is learning how people talk to each other.

- Hold baby close so they can see your eyes as you smile and talk with them.
- When your baby babbles, imitate the sounds.

Between six and nine months, your baby will play with sounds.

- Play games like Peek-a-Boo or Pat-a-Cake. Help baby move their hands along with the rhyme.



- Give baby a toy and say something about it, like "Feel how fuzzy Teddy Bear is."
- Let baby look in a mirror and ask, "Who's that?" If baby does not respond, say their name.
- Ask your baby questions, like "Where's doggie?" If baby does not answer, show baby where to look.

Between nine and twelve months, your baby will begin to understand simple words.

- Baby may look up at you and lift arms up to show you they "want up."
- Baby may hand you a toy to signal they want to play.

For more information on Infant Language Development go to <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-language-literacy/helping-learn-to-talk.html>

Child Care Options

Research confirms that good early experiences are important for a child's healthy development. Although parents are most important in a child's life, the relationship a child has with their caregiver has a huge effect too.

There is no "best" type of care for children. It depends on the needs of each child and family.

Licensed family child care homes is one in which the caregiver has met the requirements for a license to care for children in their home.

Child care centers are licensed by the state to care for larger groups of children. Centers may provide care for infants through school-age.

School-age child care programs offer care for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. Care is typically available before and after school, on school holidays and during the summer.

Preschool programs usually offer two or three hour sessions per day, a few days per week. These programs are not used primarily for child care but instead offer children an opportunity to interact with other children and prepare for school.

Family/Friend/Neighbor care is unlicensed care provided by a relative, friend or someone in the community. It can take place in the child's home or in the caregiver's home.

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Head Start/Early Head Start promotes the growth and development of children from low-income families. Parent involvement, a health program and family support are included.

In-home care means a caregiver comes to your home. Most in-home caregivers are friends, family members or nannies. Nannies often have professional training and experience. In-home caregivers are not licensed.

Choosing a caregiver is one of your most important tasks as a parent. For more information about the advantages and disadvantages of these options, visit http://parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/age3_5/topicsAZ/.

Test your knowledge about toddlers and feelings:

- T F Between 18 and 24 months, your toddler will feel empathy, embarrassment, and envy for the first time.
- T F As your toddler becomes more independent, she will need less help managing her emotions and feelings.
- T F Toddlers express emotions with body language, sounds and words.

Answers: 1) T, 2) F, 3) T

Big Feelings for Little Toddlers

Toddlers have powerful feelings, but they haven't learned how to handle them or express them in words. Your toddler may get frustrated when he doesn't get his own way or get so excited about a new ball that he chases it into the street. These emotions are brand-new to him and caring adults need to explain them.

Here are some ways you can help your toddler understand and manage his emotions.

Accept your toddler's feelings. Kneel down to her level when she's upset. Make eye contact. Listen to her story and take her feelings seriously.

Help him to calm down. A simple hug is a great first step in helping him handle his emotions. Be patient. Stay close and keep him safe until he is ready to talk.

Help her name her feelings. Naming feelings can help soothe strong emotions. Give her words—like mad, sad, frustrated, embarrassed, and excited.

Problem-solve together. Once your toddler is calm, talk about what to do next. Listen to his ideas before adding your own.

Set limits and explain why. Toddlers need to learn that certain behaviors, like pushing, kicking, or hitting others are not okay. Be sure to discipline for what she does and not what she feels.

Consider your own feelings. If you find yourself losing control of your own feelings, take a few deep breaths to calm down. Your toddler is learning how to handle his feelings by watching how you handle yours.

Learning to understand and manage emotions doesn't just happen. It takes patience and a loving commitment to teach your child about each emotion. Your job is to recognize your toddler's emotions and help guide her through those big feelings.

Source: "Life with Toddler: Parenting from 1 to 3 Years," Parenting Counts, the Talaris Institute, 2008.



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

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