

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
 Helping your child to reach their potential



Communication tips for two year olds.

Two year olds are active and sociable and “into everything”. From around two years children go through a period of rapid growth in their communication skills, developing from a toddler experimenting with combining words to a three year old who can use sentences and hold simple conversations. Children who communicate better, interact better with others and manage their emotions and behaviour more effectively, so there are pay offs in the long run for helping your child develop good skills now. Here are some ideas to develop your child’s communication skills.

Two year olds should be using at least 50 single words and putting short phrases of two or three words together. Their speech should include a range of different speech sounds though they may not use them correctly in all words. Not everything that they say may be clear and they may still use some babble when trying to express themselves but familiar people should understand much of what they say.

By two and a half years children can understand:

- what things are used for (what goes on your feet?)
- simple concepts such as big/little, hot/cold, in/out
- the difference between “he” and “she”
- follow simple instructions “find your shoes”

By two and a half years children can say:

- many single words and two word combinations
- some describing words “big”, “hot”
- ask some simple questions “what’s that?” ”where’s Dad?”
- use words for possession “mine, my teddy, daddy’s shoe”
- use plurals “two dogs”
- answer yes/no, what and where questions.



To help your child develop word combinations:

1. **Build a solid base of single words.** Children usually need around 50 single words before they begin this stage. Even after they begin to use two words they will need to continue to learn more single words to continue to develop their language skills. It is usually easier to learn a new word as a single word at this stage e.g. “zebra” then later combine it “baby zebra” “zebra eating” etc.
2. **Develop a variety of word types.** Children begin by learning lots of names of people and things. To develop two word combinations they often need to combine these nouns with a different type of word such as an action word or a descriptive word. Action words are particularly important as they form the basis of sentences later on.

Help your child learn a range of different words including:

- action words: eat, sleep, jump, dance, run;
- describing words: big, funny, sad, hot, wet;
- position words; up, in, under,
- possessive words: mine, yours,

3. **Expand the single words your child does say by adding another word.** Try to repeat it a couple of times if you can.

Sometimes you might add another word you know they can say e.g. Child “bye” Adult “**bye Dad**, Dad’s going shopping, **bye Dad**”. Sometimes you might add a new word. Child “more” Adult “toast, **more toast**, you like the toast, **more toast**.”

Your child does not need to copy you, just hearing what you say will help and they will use that phrase when they are ready. If they do try to copy you though, respond positively. If what they say is not clear still be positive and say it again clearly for them. E.g. child “more toat” Adult “yes **more toast**”.

4. **Practice games and activities where you can repeat word combinations over and over a number of times.**

Activities could include.

- Bathtime: wash + body part “wash face, wash arms, wash tummy”
- Mealtime: eat + food name “eat peas, eat carrots, eat meat”
- Dressing: clothing name + on “shirt on, pants on, socks on, hat on”
- Ball play: action + ball “roll ball, push ball, kick ball, catch ball”
- Car play: car + action/position “ car go, car stop, car up, car in, car down”
- Block play “build up, more blocks, fall down”
- Outside play “Alex + run/jump/climb/slide” “Alex under/over/in/out/through”
- Hiding dolls or animals and finding them “hello teddy, goodbye puppy”.
- Matching games “Two apples, more dog”



When your child does produce two words together all by themselves expand them to three words to keep them learning.

More ideas to develop language:

Pretend play is great for developing language and social skills. Two year olds are happy to be alongside you, copying the things they see you do every day. They could “cook” with a wooden spoon and some plastic bowls while you make tea, or “peg” some socks on the edge of the basket as you hang your clothes on the line. They can also pretend to look after teddies or dolls, copying the things you do with them such as feeding and bathing. These activities which children see repeated over and over are great for teaching action words and functions.

Talk out loud as you do jobs about the house. Talk about what you are doing and what you are using and your child will learn all kinds of things. “I’m cutting the carrots, chop, chop, chop” “I need something to mix the gravy, what could I use, spoons are good for mixing”

Sorting and tidying are great ways to practice concepts such as size, shape, colour and position words. As you sort the washing you could talk about **size**. “here are the big socks and here are the little socks. Daddy’s socks are big and yours are little.” Picking up toys could be a way to develop **colours**, “here is a red block, let’s pick up all the red blocks first.” Putting away the dishes could help develop concepts of **shape**, let’s put the square containers here and the round ones here.” and **position** “let’s put the cups up the top and the pans down the bottom.” Bathing and dressing are great for learning to combine words, “arm in, leg in” “wash your face, wash your tummy”.

While many skills can be taught as you go through the day one thing that is really worth setting aside a few minutes each day for in a busy schedule is to **read to your child**. Those few minutes will pay off in the long term with more success at school and with your child developing a love of reading and learning.