



Helping Your Toddler With Talking

Describe Instead of Asking

When your child is passive or is a less confident communicator, it is tempting to ask questions to get conversation going. This approach often has the opposite effect and can stop interaction altogether if children feel under pressure, don't understand or don't have the words to respond.



Sometimes too many questions can feel like a 'test' to children. Also asking questions doesn't let your child hear you using important new words.

Here are a few tips that help you interact without using questions:

Turn a question into a description

- Instead of asking a question, talk about what you or your child is doing ...
- Instead of asking: "Is this car going up?" You could say: "Car goes up."

Say new words instead of testing whether your child knows the word ...

- Instead of asking: "What's that?" or "Say apple?" You could say: "Look, apple, crunchy apple."

Ask yourself a question!

- Avoid using direct questions to your child by questioning yourself! This may open up an opportunity for your child to comment. Try "I wonder what will happen if? or "I bet..."

Sometimes we do need to ask questions but in play and at chatting times it's more helpful for your child's language development if you use less of them and describe and comment more.

When you do have to use questions, remember for early talkers some kinds of questions may be just too difficult. Typically, children learn to understand 'what' questions before 'when' and 'why'.

Choices

If you need to get your child to make a choice it can sometimes be difficult to get a response to a question. For example, if you say 'What do you want for breakfast?' your child may struggle to find the word for the thing that he really likes.

You can help by giving them a choice of alternatives:

"Do you want crispies or toast?"

If your child doesn't have many words you can help by showing them the things to choose from. For example show them boots and trainers:

"Do you want to wear your boots or your trainers?"

If your child points, accept their choice and say the words they would if they could:

"Trainers, you want trainers today. Let's put your trainers on then"

Letting your child make choices even if they don't use words helps them become more independent and more motivated to communicate with you!