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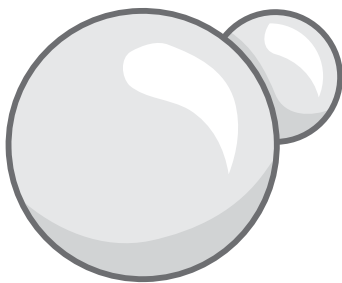
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Introduction

Welcome to *Talking with Your Toddler!* We are two speech-language pathologists who have joined together to write a book filled with fun and exciting games and crafts designed to help improve your toddler's speech. Teresa Laikko is a certified speech-language pathologist who has worked for over thirty years in a variety of settings, including schools, homes, and hospitals. Her daughter, Laura Laikko, has recently received her master's degree in speech-language pathology and has provided services for toddlers, children, and adults.

Our book has been designed with toddlers in mind. While the activities are targeted at children who are two to five years of age, we believe that these activities and strategies

can be used with all children, including typically developing and non-typically developing toddlers.

In picking up this book you have demonstrated an interest in your toddler's language development. This is awesome. Language is everything. Why? Language is essential to all kinds of communication. This can include requests, comments, expressing wants and needs, and interpersonal communication. We want toddlers to have a good foundation in language skills so that they can build to more complex skills. Language has a great impact on educational success as well.

How to Use This Book


The goal of our book is to present parents, professionals in child development, and family members with fun activities that encourage language development in toddlers. Providing multiple opportunities for children to practice their language skills and learn new vocabulary, these activities include games and crafts that are engaging and affordable, often using materials found around the house. The strategies can be incorporated into your daily life to encourage a child's language development.

An important note: This book is not a replacement for speech-language therapy or other services. This book cannot "cure" a child who needs services. This book can only provide strategies and activities to help children expand


their language skills. It also contains resources regarding speech-language services, as well as information on identifying when a child may need to get evaluated. Additionally, this book covers developmental milestones and the approximate age when the average child reaches them.

Our book is designed to provide you with ways to expand your child's language through conversation and play. It is organized to be user-friendly to you, the busy parent. First, we talk about why language is so important. Then, we present several strategies that you can use when talking with your child in order to enhance their language development. We will refer to these strategies throughout the book, including ways to use them over the course of your day, during special occasions and holidays, and even in the midst of errands and outings.

We also have chapters dedicated to promoting literacy with your child, as well as helping them to express their emotions. Because many children at this age will attend preschool, we have also included information on ways to prepare your child for this big step. We will review techniques to expand your child's language using technology and strategies to help them improve their production of speech sounds so that you can understand them. Finally, you'll find plenty of information about when to seek the help of a speech-language professional and how to find the best person for the job.



Did you know that by talking to your child, you are building their brain? Dana Suskind, a pediatric surgeon and author of *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain*, states that the brain is hardwired to learn from human language and interaction. She founded a project called the Thirty Million Words Initiative, developed at the University of Chicago. This initiative began after researchers discovered that children in poor households often hear far fewer words than in households that are more affluent. They estimated that by age three, children in poverty hear thirty million less words than in other households. Dr. Suskind says that language is the nutrition for the developing brain—the most important thing you can do for child's future success is to talk to them.



Why Now?

Why focus on language in toddlers? Most of the wiring of the human brain occurs during the first three years of life, and research has shown us that children's language is related to the amount of talking that parents do with their children.¹ We want to help you find and take advantage of

1 Riskey, T. R. and B. Hart, *Promoting Early Language Development* (2006). In N. F. Watt, C. Ayoub, R. H. Bradley, J. Puma, and W. A. LeBoeuf, eds., *The Crisis In Youth Mental Health: Critical Issues and Effective Programs*, Vol. 4 (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Press, 2006): 83-88.

opportunities to have conversation with your toddler. Use our strategies while playing with your child, and watch their language expand!

Thank you for picking up our book. Let's have some fun!