



Communicating Kids – 2 to 3 years

By 2 years old children should be building on their earlier skills of looking, reaching, pointing and using facial expressions; enjoying sharing in interactions with others for longer periods of time. The words they understand and use should continue to grow, with short sentences emerging and more people being able to understand them.

Social Communication

Children should be beginning to show an awareness of their feelings and responding to the feelings of others. They will probably have increasing interest in other children and joining in with their play; engaging more in pretend play and beginning to form and develop friendships. Children of this age should be showing interest in sharing activities like a toy, book or physical game with others. They are likely to still be very active and find it difficult to pay attention to activities for very long.

Language

Understanding: By 2 years old children should be able to understand most daily routines and familiar instructions and be working towards understanding longer instructions eg. "where's mummy's nose?" or "make rabbit jump". They will be developing understanding of simple questions including information about 'who' 'what' and 'where'.

Expressing themselves: Children at this age are likely to use lots of object words (nouns) and be starting to use some action words (verbs) eg. "jump" or "eat". By the time they are 3 years old children should be using over 200 single words. They will typically be starting to put these single words together to make simple sentences such as "more juice", "coat on". Don't worry if these sentences aren't quite correct- children are still learning how language works.

Speech

Children will be starting to use a wider range of speech sounds and becoming more understandable to less familiar adults. They might still shorten longer words and struggle with tricky sounds like "s" and "f". There are lots of later developing sounds ("ch", "sh", "r" and "l") and sound combinations (eg "sp") that we would expect children of this age to find difficult. Examples: fish might be "pish", banana might be "nana", spider might be "pider", rabbit might be "wabbit".



What can adults do

- *Talk, Sing, Read – Repeat.* Talking, singing and reading stories to your child means they are surrounded by interesting words, which supports their language learning, as well as their attention and listening skills. Hearing language lots of times will help them with learning and storing new words.
- *Build on what they say*– repeat what your child has said and extend their interaction by adding to it eg. if your child says “biscuit” you can say “biscuit! Want biscuit”.
- *Model good talking*– Model words and sentences they could use (instead of asking lots of questions). If they say things not quite right, model it back to them correctly eg Child: “nana” , Adult: “ok, you want banana, lets get banana”.
- *Get their attention*– if the tv is on and they are playing and then you talk to them they may struggle to respond. Reduce distractions, get on their level/ in front of them- don't overload them with information.
- *Focus on action words*– if your child has lots of object words provide opportunities for them to hear action words.

Try this... 1 Talking Change (Make a Plan...and stick to it).

Think carefully about your child's communication skills and 1 thing you could do (change or focus on) to help them.

Decide what:

- If they have a few object words... focus on modelling more object words.
- If they have lots of object words... focus on some action words.
- If they are using single words... build on what they say and model 2 word sentences.

Decide when:

- On the school run: comment on 10 things (objects: tree/ bus/ shoes or actions: pushing, driving, walking, running).
- In the afternoon: turn the tv off and join them in play for half an hour.
- At bath time; focus on action words- washing, pouring, splashing, blowing, drying.
- At bedtime: Read a book together every night.

Disclaimer

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