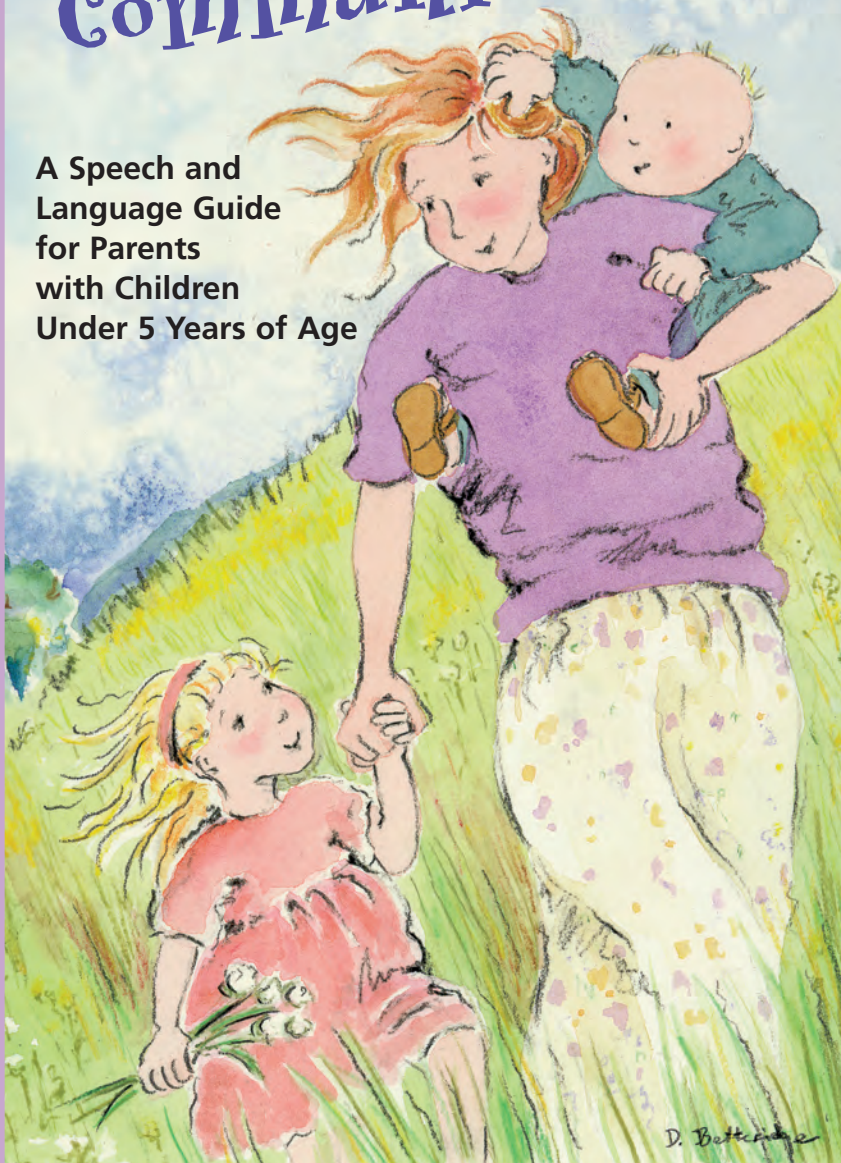


# Growing with Communication

A Speech and  
Language Guide  
for Parents  
with Children  
Under 5 Years of Age



Revised - 4<sup>th</sup> Edition

\*Revised according to new Ministry of Children & Youth Services guidelines  
- March 07  
Thanks to Jill Petherick for doing these revisions.



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This book belongs to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Paste your baby's picture here

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Tracy Howson

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## Introduction

“Mankind owes to the child  
the best that it has  
to give...”

Opening words of the United Nations’  
Declaration of the Rights of the Child

As parents, grandparents or caregivers – whether new or experienced – we have an obligation to nurture our children with love and guidance and help them to thrive. In fulfilling this obligation, we set them on the road to being the best they can possibly be.

What we do in these crucial early years, makes a difference.

This booklet is produced for you by the Durham Preschool Speech and Language Program and **Healthy Babies, Healthy Children** - Durham. We hope it will help to guide you and your child as you begin the journey of “growing with communication”.

**“Each day - you and your child grow with communication.”**

There are many aspects of a child's development but none is more crucial than the process of learning to communicate and interact effectively - not only with you but with the world in general. A good rule of thumb in language development is to discover what your child is interested in at the moment and then, allow the child to lead the way.



This booklet is divided into chapters, by age group. However, the truth is: children often surprise us, seldom following the expected path.

Because of that, we suggest you use this booklet as a guide rather than a strictly defined set of rules.

This booklet will help you:

- better understand how your child develops communication skills
- develop ideas, games and activities that will improve communication skills
- recognize areas where your child may have difficulty communicating



- know when to seek help and show you where to go.

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs you can ever have and few of us bring formal training to the role. Children depend on us totally – for everything – and sometimes the knowledge of this responsibility can seem overwhelming. Just remember – **you're not alone.**

**Each child is unique, with individual strengths and capabilities.**

Organizations like **Healthy Babies, Healthy Children** are available to provide guidance and a helping hand. If you have concerns – please call. There are no such things as silly questions or superficial worries.

These times are precious.  
Our children grow up  
so quickly.

Each child is unique, with individual strengths and capabilities. As your child grows and learns to communicate, make note of important days.

Please keep this book and share it with your child in years to come. Children – and adults too – love to know when it was that they learned to do something for the first time! Years from now, you'll be very glad you did!

In the meantime, our very best wishes to you and to your child as together, you begin the wondrous journey of **"growing with communication"**.



**The first 12 months**

### The First Twelve Months

**Growing with communication** and learning about the world begins the day a child is born, yet each child develops differently. It's important to remember that there are no strict rules for progress - just general guidelines. We've listed some indications of growing in communication below. Watch for these signs – and note them down. Remember that babies under three months of age are mostly interested in people.

**Young Babies** (up to 3 months old) will:

- Startle, cry or awaken at a loud noise
- Make noises such as coos or gurgles
- Turn toward you when you speak
- Cry differently for different needs (e.g. hunger, fatigue, discomfort)
- Seem to recognize your voice and be calmed when you speak gently
- Smile at you
- Follow moving objects with their eyes.

*“Babies under three months of age are more interested in people than in objects.”*

## **Your Six Month Old**

By six months, your baby is paying more attention to you, making sounds and reacting to the world you provide. Below are some speech and language achievements most six-month old children can manage.

- turns to source of sounds.
- startles in response to sudden, loud noises
- makes different cries for different needs - I'm hungry, I'm tired
- watches your face as you talk
- smiles and laughs in response to your smiles and laughs
- imitates coughs or other sounds - ah, eh, buh

Even though babies under a year old need lots of sleep and don't have a long attention span, you and your child can still enjoy playing together. As they approach six months, their interest in objects, especially moving ones, gets stronger, but you'll continue to be your child's favourite playmate for quite a while yet.

## **Your Nine Month Old**

- responds to his/her name
- responds to the telephone ringing or a knock at the door
- understands being told "no"
- gets what he/she wants through sounds and gestures e.g., reaching to be picked up
- plays social games with you e.g., peek-a-boo
- enjoys being around people
- babbles and repeats sounds - babababa, duhduhduh

It's important to respond to vocalizations and actions. For example, you can imitate noises or make comments on the different actions of your child. This encourages your baby to do even more and it sets the groundwork for "turn-taking" in conversation.

# Games to Play

Whether you're a parent, grandparent or caregiver, playing games provides some of life's purest and most cherished moments. And children love to play! Especially with someone they love!

Here are a few games and activities you and your baby might want to try. As the weeks and months slip by, you'll be making up some of your own:



- Interactive games like "peek a boo", "this little piggy went to market", "pat a cake" and "soooo big!"
- Songs like "head and shoulders, knees and toes", while gently touching those parts of your baby's body.
- It's never too early to begin reading to your child. Bedtime and nap times are perfect opportunities. Keep the story simple and watch your child's interest level.

- Talk to your baby during bath, dressing or feeding times. Your child is absorbing lots of new information, so speak clearly, naturally and affectionately – and remember to keep the words simple.

“When you talk, keep the words simple.”



- Get down to your child's level and face your child when you speak, using natural facial expressions and gestures. This helps the baby understand the meaning of what you say.
- Put a mirror or a mobile in your baby's crib.
- Crib gyms offer your child something to reach for and they teach lessons of cause and effect.
- Imitate your baby's facial expressions and lip movements. Change the pitch of your voice for emphasis and when you ask a question, raise your voice at the end of the sentence.



## When to be concerned

Your first year with your baby will speed by. As you get to know each other, you'll find yourself making all sorts of observations. In the area of hearing and speaking, here are two important things to watch for:

- If your child does not smile or make sounds when awake, call your local preschool speech and language program. The number is in the back of this booklet.
- If your baby does not look toward a sound or is not startled by a loud sound, call your doctor and ask for a referral to an audiologist for a hearing assessment.

An audiologist is a specialist who can assess your child's hearing capabilities from as early as infancy. An audiologist will know how to help, should your child have a hearing problem.

# Special Memories

Birth to 11 months



**Your One Year Old**

## Chapter Two

### Your One Year Old

Communication skills begin early in every child's life, yet we must never forget that each develops differently. The list of accomplishments below is meant as a guideline and should **not** be seen as a strictly adhered to set of rules.

**By age one, children recognize their names and try to imitate sounds, words and actions.**

By the first year, you have a curious toddler on your hands who's in love with the world. Most one year-old children can accomplish the following feats of communication.

- follows simple one-step directions - "sit down"
- looks across the room to something you point to
- consistently uses three to five words
- uses gestures to communicate - waves "bye bye", shakes head "no"
- gets your attention using sounds, gestures and pointing while looking at your eyes

- brings you toys to show you
- "performs" for attention and praise
- combines lots of sounds as though talking -  
abada baduh abee
- shows interest in simple picture books

Reaching that important first year is an exciting and joyful time now that your child has begun to interact with you. By age one, children recognize their names and try to imitate sounds, words and actions. Your child's concentration time increases and as a result, learning new things is an almost daily occurrence.



*“One year old children have  
NO understanding of danger.  
Watch them constantly.”*

- Always remember that while one year old children are curious and have unlimited energy and a driving independence – they have no understanding of danger. They need constant protection from harm.
- Every day your one year old reaches out to understand language and sounds, taking part even more actively in interactive games like “peek-a-boo” and “pat-a-cake”.



“One year olds show a great deal of affection by making noises and gestures and patting you gently and lovingly.”

By the time your child reaches one year, you'll want to start keeping a “log book” of new words.

## Games to Play

One year olds enjoy games that involve taking turns with you, rolling a ball or a toy car back and forth, taking turns filling and dumping out containers, pushing buttons on cause-and-effect toys, handing blocks back and forth or banging on pots are all sources of great amusement. And there are lots of other games too:

- Games of anticipation like “round and round the garden”, “I’m going to get you”, or “bear’s gonna kiss baby”
- Simple songs with actions, like “Ring around the Rosie” or “Row Row Row Your Boat” help your child to copy your actions and sounds
- Take turns hiding behind your hands, a towel or a blanket and then moving it away saying “where is Daddy?” “here I am!” or “peek-a-boo!”

- Play “hide the object”. At first, let your child watch you hide an object. Later, try the game with objects partially hidden and without letting your child watch you hide them. Use common objects, naming them as you play.
- Repeat correctly the words your child says. For instance, if your child says “baw” for “ball”, smile and say “Yes! Ball! Roll the ball”.
- Talk about what you’re doing as you’re doing it, using short sentences. For example, “want milk?”, “come kitty” or “hot stove.”
- Name pieces of clothing and body parts as you dress your child. Sentences like “shoes off feet”, “hat on head” help children learn words and meanings.
- Teach the word “more” by giving lots of opportunities to ask for “more” of some thing, like snacks or more turns at an activity. As you do, pause and wait for a response which could be a physical movement, sound or the word “more” in response.





## When to be concerned

As a parent or caregiver, you will naturally always pay close attention to your child's learning patterns and general health.

However please note:

- If your child has had two or more ear infections in the past year, your doctor may want to be alerted to a potential problem.

**Always schedule a follow-up visit to your doctor after the baby's medicine is finished to ensure the ear infection has healed properly.**

If you notice any of the following patterns of behaviour, please contact your local preschool speech and language program. They'll be happy to advise you. The telephone number is in the back of this booklet.

- If your child does not wave back at you when you say "bye-bye" and wave.
- If your child does not try to show you things by reaching or looking.
- If your child does not make babbling sounds (with consonants and vowels).
- If your child does not attempt to imitate any speech sounds.

## **Special Memories**

12 to 17 months



**Your 18 Month Old**

### Your 18 Month Old

By the time children reach 18 months, you'll notice they begin to imitate you, watching your movements and making the sounds of words you use. The words may not always be clear, but new words are a regular occurrence so keep your ears open – this is a learning process for your child and for you.

*“The words may not  
always be clear...  
but that's okay!”*

At a year and a half, you'll be able to understand at least 25% of what your child says. Learning happens quickly – for both of you! Talk with your child when you go for walks, work in the garden or clean the house or yard. Listen to your child too. These simple everyday exchanges provide a rich variety of experiences that help stimulate speech and language development.

Here are a few speech and language milestones within the reach of most 18 month old children.

- understands the concepts of "in and out", "off and on"
- points to several body parts when asked
- uses at least 20 words
- responds with words or gestures to simple questions - "Where's teddy?", "What's that?"
- demonstrates some pretend play with toys - gives teddy a drink
- makes at least four different consonant sounds - p, b, m, n, d, g, w, h
- enjoys being read to and looking at simple books with you
- points to pictures using one finger

*"All children need  
positive feedback...  
give it!"*

All children need positive feedback – no matter what age they are. There are all sorts of ways to increase confidence and speed the learning process.

- Look at your child when he or she talks to you. If you can, crouch down to your child's level as you talk to each other.

- Praise your child's efforts to communicate and don't be concerned with unclear speech at this time. If the words aren't clear, simply repeat your child's word using the "correct" pronunciation. As often as possible, try to expand on what the child has said. For instance if the child points and says "daw", smile and say "Yes. Dog. Big dog."



# Games to Play

At 18 months, children are curious and love to play with noisy active toys.

A “jack-in-the-box”, noisemakers or pull toys are perfect examples. Here’s a few simple, enjoyable activities you and your child can enjoy together:

- Play music. Show your child how to move to music and participate in songs.
- Read to them. Children like to pretend that they are reading too, so choose books that are sturdy and have large, colourful, uncomplicated pictures. As you and your child read them, ask “what’s that?” to encourage naming and pointing to familiar objects.
- Play imitating games. For example, mimic the sound of a dog barking, a bird chirping or actions like clapping.
- Make a tape of family members’ voices and other familiar sounds in the home. Play them and see if your child can identify who and what they are.
- Take turns banging on pots and pans.
- Put objects in plastic containers, shake them, then open and close them, taking things out and putting things in. As you do this, use words like “in”, “out”, “more” and “shake”.

- Fill containers with water or sand and take turns dumping them out.
- Stacking and nesting cups are fascinating toys for children of this age.
- Bath time is an ideal time to use the bath water to pour into and out of containers. It's also a good time to show them how to clean up afterwards!
- When walking with your child, point to trees, birds, swings and squirrels, naming them clearly.

**Children  
develop at  
different rates  
- watch  
closely for  
signs of  
regular  
progress and  
development.**





## When to be concerned

Watch closely for signs of regular progress and development. While it's true that children develop at different rates, contact your local preschool speech and language program if, at 18 months:

- Your child is not trying to talk to you.
- Your child does not follow simple requests such as "come here", or "want more", etc.
- Your child does not recognize the words for common objects such as "juice", "cookie", "car", etc.

# **Special Memories**

18 months



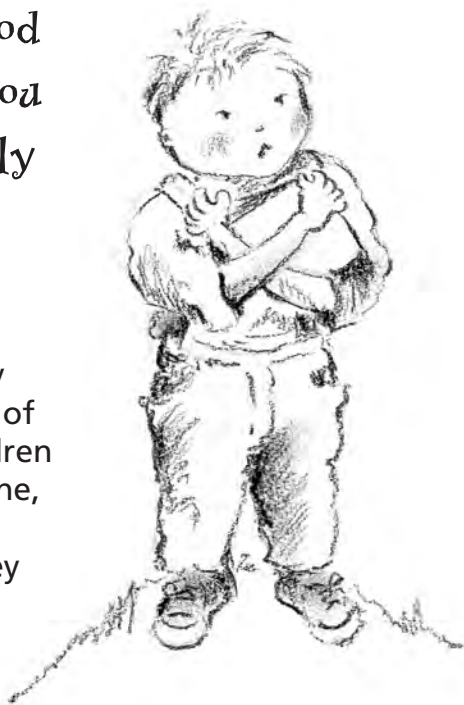
**Your Two Year Old**

### Your Two Year Old

Your child is two years old and you're noticing an attention span that increases almost daily! Two year olds can become absorbed in an activity for six or seven minutes at a time. Not only that, most understand approximately 400 words. Confidence increases at this age, and you'll begin to notice that they readily ask for things they want. And beware!

"Two year olds  
are very good  
at letting you  
know exactly  
what they  
want!"

By the time they reach two years of age, many children start to play alone, alongside other children and they take turns in run-and-chase games.



They like to participate in circle games, enjoy running up and down ramps, and jumping off obstacles. **Keep a close eye on them...always.**

Here are a few speech and language milestones within the reach of most two year olds.

- follows two-step directions - "Go find your teddy bear and show it to Grandma"
- uses 100 or more words
- uses at least two pronouns - "you", "me", "mine"
- consistently combines two or more words in short phrases - "daddy hat", "truck go down"
- enjoys being with other children
- begins to offer toys to peers and imitates other children's actions and words
- people can understand his/her words 50 to 60 per cent of the time
- forms words and sounds easily and effortlessly
- holds books the right way up and turns pages
- "reads" to stuffed animals or toys
- scribbles with crayons

*“As your child grows in communication, it’s very important to praise those efforts. All children need praise.”*

You may hear “mine, mine, mine” more frequently, especially when it comes to sharing belongings. Be patient. This is a natural stage. To prevent tantrums when other children are present, redirect them to different toys. Once your child sees that toys will be returned when play is over, sharing will evolve graciously.

- Listen carefully and avoid saying “I don’t understand you.” Perhaps give an alternative when you can’t understand.
- Repeat new words over and over again.
- Repeating what your child says shows that you understand. Expand on what the child says. For example, for “want juice”, answer back “want juice? I have juice. I have apple juice. Do you want apple juice?”
- Ask questions like “who”, “what”, “where” or “what are you doing” that require more than a yes or no answer. This helps stimulate thought and speech.
- Talk about what you’re doing or what you see while shopping or driving.

- Be sure to use the proper names of words. For example, use the correct word "bottle", not "bawbaw" as your child might say it.



*"By two years -  
you should be understanding  
50% to 60% of your child's  
spoken words."*

## **Games to Play**

Two year olds love simple songs with actions such as "Itsy, bitsy spider", "Round and round the garden", or "Where is Thumbkin?".

Learning is a game and their world is a constant source of adventure. Join in and make it fun for both of you!

- Hide objects and ask "where's the ball" or "find the teddy". Talk about where you hid them, using words such as "on", "in", "under".

**Books with simple colourful pictures are fascinating, especially interactive books with flaps that open or dials that move.**

- Plan their birthdays with them. Bake a cake or cupcakes and let them add personal decorating touches. Invite one or two guests and take lots of pictures. Afterward, when you look at the photos together, describe them using short sentences and "action words". For instance "Look, Kelly is eating cake", "Sal is opening a box."
- Play "pretend" and "make-believe" games. Keep a dress-up box filled with old hats, scarves, mitts, old purses and other items.
- Let your child give you a dental check-up.
- If you can, provide a play centre. It need not be expensive or elaborate. A small table and chair in the kitchen, the bedroom or a corner of the basement lets children be near the action while exploring their own activities.
- Books with simple colourful pictures are fascinating. Interactive books with flaps that open or dials that move, are especially good at this age.
- Home-made books like scrapbooks and family photo albums are great fun. Be sure you use action words and descriptive words when talking about the pictures.
- If you like gardening, let your child help by digging and planting.



- A fenced-in backyard gives your child the opportunity to explore while being closely supervised.



## When to be concerned

When children play together, colds and other common childhood illnesses are almost impossible to avoid. However:

- If repeated ear infections occur, have your child's hearing checked by an audiologist.

With your help, your child's communication skills should improve from week-to-week and month-to-month. However:

- If your two-year-old is not yet using two to four words in short phrases, for example "daddy hat"; "truck go down" or is not following simple two-step directions like "go find your teddy bear and show it to Grandma", or responding to simple questions like "where's your sock?" , contact your local preschool speech-language program.

# **Special Memories**

Two Years



**Your Two and a Half  
Year Old**

## Chapter Five

### Your Two & a Half Year Old

It seems like only yesterday your child turned two years old. Now – six months later – you’re looking at a huge communication improvement.

**By two and a half years, most children can communicate relatively clearly.**

By two and a half, most children have become increasingly familiar with the world around them, and are beginning to have considerable control over their bodies. They’re more social, more independent and less clingy. And it’s right around this age you’ll find yourself having “real conversations” with them.

**At two and a half years, children:**

- Understand most of what you say, as long as it has to do with their daily routines and experiences.
- Can show a love of being with other children, but also display some difficulty with sharing and taking turns.
- Have longer attention spans when playing with favourite toys or reading stories.
- May want to “help” adults and imitate their behaviour.

“At two and a half, many children want to ‘help’ and imitate your behaviour.”

Here are some speech and language milestones most two and a half year old children can master.

- understands the concepts of size (big/little) and quantity (a little, a lot, more)
- uses some adult grammar - "two cookies", "bird flying", "I jumped"
- uses more than 350 words
- uses action words - run, spill, fall
- begins taking short turns with other children, using both toys and words
- shows concern when another child is hurt or sad
- drives train and drops blocks off
- combines several actions in play - feeds doll then puts her to sleep
- puts sounds at the start of most words
- produces words with two or more syllables or beats - "ba-na-na", "com-pu-ter", "a-pple"
- recognizes familiar logos and signs - McDonald's golden arches, stop sign
- remembers and understands familiar stories

# Games to Play

By two and a half, many children are ready for an organized play program with other children. If your child doesn't go to a day-care, you might like to check out a local child and parent group or a half-day program. You can also visit library programs, play groups and groups in the park. Your child is soaking up new experiences like a sponge. Here are just a few games you can try:

**During trips,  
play  
word  
games to  
help  
expand  
vocabulary.**

- Under supervision, drawing on paper or an old box with a large crayon.
- "Storybook dolls" and "Participation books" are great play things.
- Dress a boy- and a girl-doll, using clothing words and pronouns such as "he", "she", "him" and "her" as you play.
- Playdough is a great way to experiment with making shapes. Plastic cookie cutters and rolling pins make great toys. Use action words like "pounding", "patting" and "rolling" and descriptive words like "squishy", "big" and "little".



“When you bake, let your child help you stir, pour, knead dough, or shape cookies.

The mess you make will be worth the memories!”

- Reading, at any time, is always a great way to help children learn and develop their creativity and curiosity. Let your child hold the book and turn the pages while you read the story or point to and name the pictures.
- Take them to the library to pick out books.
- Record your child on a tape recorder and play it back. (You may want to keep a tape

with samples of conversation as your child grows).

- Play “head and shoulder” games in front of a mirror, or “Simon says”, allowing lots of opportunities to be successful.
- During trips, play word games to help expand vocabulary. For instance, look for animals in fields, or buildings and vehicles of a certain colour.
- Play “tea party”. Use instructions like “Give me the fork; you take the spoon”, and “the little cup is mine, the big one is for you!” Give instructions, using “in”, “on” and “under”.



## **When to be concerned**

While children develop at different rates, by two and a half years, most children can communicate relatively clearly. They also show an interest in social activities with other children their age.

If you notice any of the following behavioural patterns please call the local preschool speech and language program nearest you for advice and guidance:

- Your child prefers to play alone or doesn't seek adult attention.
- Your child's speech patterns consist mostly of imitations or echoed speech.
- Your child answers questions inappropriately.

## **Another important point:**

- If your child has had multiple ear infections, ask your family doctor for a referral to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist .

# **Special Memories**

Two and a half years



**Your Three Year Old**

### Your Three Year Old

By three, children's attention span and communication skills are improving rapidly. They have words for nearly everything and you'll be able to understand almost all of them. Three year olds are also becoming aware of social rules and polite words like "please". It's not unusual for them to concentrate on activities for eight or nine minutes at a time.

Your child will want to 'help' you, so offer small jobs. At this age, children take pride in being a helper and a contributing member of the household.

*"Like all of us,  
children want and need approval.  
And like all of us,  
they like to feel successful.  
Doing small jobs helps build a  
child's sense of accomplishment  
and confidence."*



Making choices offers children a sense of control. At this age, let them pick between two items you're comfortable with, for instance: "do you want your blue sweater or the red one?" or "do you want an apple or a banana for a snack?"

By this age, speech and language milestones are happening rapidly. Here are a few that most three year olds can master.

**This is the time to check out preschool play groups in your community where your child can play with others the same age.**

- understands "who", "what", "where" and "why" questions
- creates long sentences, using 5 or more words
- talks about past events - trip to grandparents' house, day at childcare
- tells simple stories
- shows affection for favourite playmates
- engages in multi-step pretend play - cooking a meal, repairing a car
- is understood by most people outside of the family, most of the time
- is aware of the function of print - in menus, lists, signs
- has a beginning interest in, and awareness of, rhyming

# Games to Play

At three, children begin to play cooperatively with each other. This is the time to check out preschool play groups or programs in your community where your child can play with others of the same age. These programs might include organized playtime or a gym group supervised by a trained leader.

“With a three year old,  
the only limits are your  
imagination...”

Many libraries offer a free story hour for young children. When it's over, ask your child to share the story they heard with you. By listening and commenting, you build confidence in your child's ability to relate thoughts and experiences.

There are lots of other activities you can share with your three year old.

- Play matching or memory games like Candyland and Lotto where each of you takes turns. Keep it upbeat and watch that your child doesn't become too tired or frustrated.

**Painting and drawing are fun for three year olds. Keep an old shirt handy to protect clothing.**

- Let your child count out treats like raisins or other snacks for himself and a friend.
- Reading to your child develops language and broadens the imagination. By encouraging make-believe stories about a picture in the book, you'll be building confidence.
- As you read, run your finger underneath the words. This links the words on the page to the story.
- Painting and drawing are fun for three year olds. Keep an old shirt handy to protect clothing. When the drawing is done, ask your child to tell you something about the picture, write it under the drawing and read it back to the child.
- Start a cut-and-paste scrapbook of word groups, with a page for "clothes", "furniture", "people", etc. Talk about how the pictures are the same or different, for example this person is "tall", this one is "short"; this chair is "soft" and this one is "hard".



“Guess what I have in this bag!  
It’s made of wool, you wear  
it on your hands to keep them  
warm, and you have a  
green pair”.



“I know!  
It’s my mittens.”

- Guess what an object is by feeling it.  
If you use a hairbrush, ask how it feels,  
“is it soft or hard?”, “is it cold or warm?”,  
“is it smooth or rough?”.

## When to be concerned

By three, most children are learning to communicate clearly with adults and other children. They're learning social skills and testing their boundaries of independence.

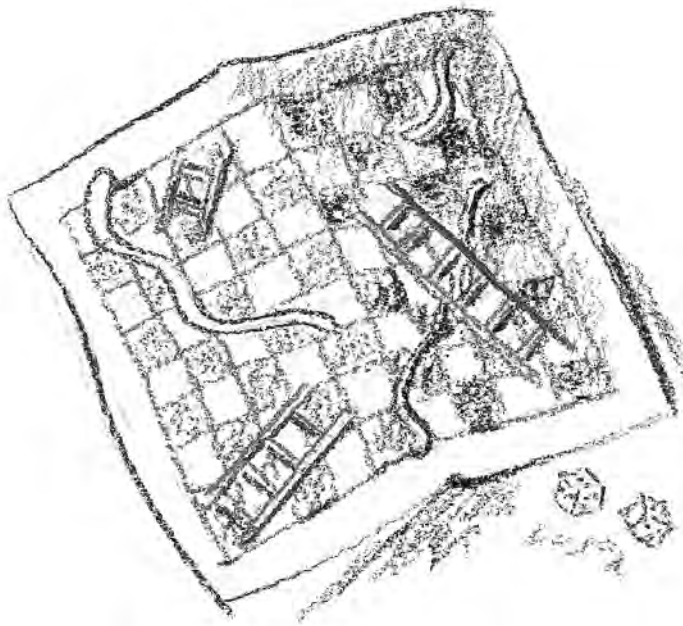
**If your child avoids interacting with others call your local speech and language program immediately.**

**If you notice any of the following behavioural signs, call your local speech and language program immediately.**

- Your child begins to "stutter" or has non-fluent speech that lasts longer than three months. This may include repeating sounds, parts of words, whole words or not being able to get a sound started.
- Your child develops "extra" struggling behavior, eye blinking or fist clenching. If this happens, **do not** criticize your child by saying "slow down" or "start again".
- Your child is frustrated or showing other signs of awareness that speech is difficult.
- Your child rarely makes eye contact with anyone.
- Your child avoids interacting with others.
- Your child does not use three or more words in a sentence.
- You can only understand half of what your child is saying.

# **Special Memories**

Three years



**Your Four Year Old**

### Your Four Year Old

Ask anyone who's familiar with four year olds! Their curiosity is unbounded! Questions pour out of them even though they're not always very interested in the answers! Attention span is longer too – most four year olds can stay involved in an activity for 11 to 12 minutes at a time.

**At four, children absorb information and new experiences like a sponge!**

Speech is clearer, with the exception of sounds like "r", "l", "th", "v" or "s", and people outside your family can almost always understand what your child is saying.

At four, children watch, listen and respond continually. They absorb information and new experiences like a sponge! They've learned to match and name colours and shapes, count and follow directions and they're constantly learning how to communicate more clearly with you and other family members.

When talking to your four year old, you can use all three verb tenses when you talk about activities. You can use future tense: "We'll go shopping tomorrow", or present tense: "Now we are getting on the bus" and you can use past tense: "We visited the animals at the zoo yesterday".

“If words aren’t always pronounced correctly, don’t be too concerned, but DO give the correct speech model when you reply to your child.”

Most four year olds can complete the following list of accomplishments.

- follows directions involving 3 or more steps -  
"First get some paper, then draw a picture, last give it to mom"
- uses adult-type grammar
- tells stories with a clear beginning, middle and end
- talks to try to solve problems with adults and other children
- demonstrates increasingly complex imaginative play
- is understood by strangers almost all of the time
- is able to generate simple rhymes - "cat-bat"
- matches some letters with their sounds -  
"letter T says 'tuh'

# Games to Play

Don't be surprised to realize your four year old is growing up quickly. It's not unusual for children of this age to join in discussions of where to go on a family day trip or a picnic. Getting involved in arranging their own birthday parties, choosing games to play with friends on the big day and even planning what chores need to be done in preparation becomes a wonderful game.

“Remember....build success into every activity.

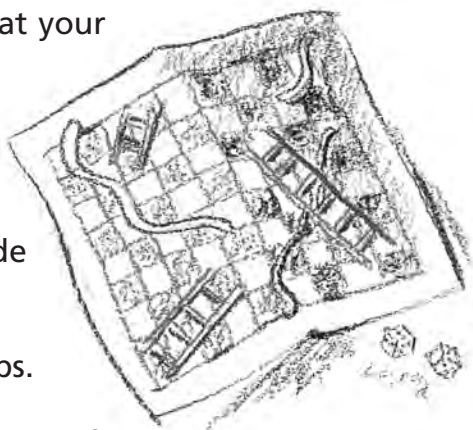
When assigning small chores, make them simple enough to be within easy reach of your four year old!

Then watch as pride in accomplishment blossoms!”

There is no end to games that provide terrific opportunities for you and your family members to have fun and learn alongside your four year old. Here's just a sampling of some games you can try:

- Challenging toys like construction sets, puzzles and computer games.

- Simple games like “Snakes and Ladders” or “Go Fish”.
- Category games, for instance: take a shoe, an apple and an orange and then identify the one that doesn’t belong. You can say “a shoe doesn’t belong with an apple and an orange because you can’t eat it. It’s not round and it’s not a fruit.” Then ask your child to pick from a different set of three objects, each time explaining which object doesn’t belong, and why.
- Longer stories. When reading stories, point out words with your finger while you read then ask what your child thinks will happen next.



- Puppets made out of old socks, paper bags or scraps.
- Stories with lots of rhythm and rhymes, like Dr. Seuss storybooks.
- Arts and crafts. Create silly pictures – cut out a picture of a dog and paste it behind the steering wheel of a car. Or paste a picture of a cell phone against a cow’s ear. Then talk about what’s wrong with the picture and why.



*“Always.....encourage your  
child’s imagination.”*

Act out favourite nursery rhymes and fairy tales or let your child pick ordinary household objects and then create a story, using all the items chosen.

**Act out  
favourite  
nursery  
rhymes.  
Let your  
child pick  
household  
objects and  
create a  
story.**

## **When to be concerned**

No one knows your child better than you do. Even if you don't know exactly what it is, you are an expert in sensing when things are not quite right.

If you notice any of the following signs from your four year old, call your local preschool speech and language program:

- If your child uses less than four words per sentence on average.
- If other people don't understand your child's speech.
- If your child has word-finding problems, for example, makes up words or uses "fillers" and vague terms for words he or she already knows.

## **Another important point:**

- If your child has a rough, raspy voice lasting longer than one month, ask your family doctor for a referral to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist to check the child's vocal cords.

# **Special Memories**

Four years



**Your Five Year Old**

## Chapter Eight

### Your Five Year Old

At this age, children have learned so much – and are eager for even more. If kindergarten is available in your area, this is the year your child could start. Children of five years speak fairly clearly; they watch and absorb your actions and your patterns of speech. Not only that, you'll notice that attention span has grown immensely.

**Your child's sentence structure is improving and will be almost 'adult-like' by this age.**

Five year olds can concentrate on a single activity for 12 to 13 minutes and most know which is their left and right hand. They play co-operatively with friends for long periods of time – and at storytime, you notice that they're aware of the moral behind the tale.

Your child's sentence structure is improving rapidly and, with a few exceptions, will be almost 'adult-like' by this age even though there may still be a few grammar mistakes. Instead of correcting your child, remember, children learn best by example. When grammar errors occur, repeat the sentence while emphasizing the corrected word.

Child: "They goed to the store"

Dad: "Yes, they went to the store...hmmm..."

I wonder what they bought."

Child: "Ice cream!"

Speech and language breakthroughs at this age are happening so fast, it's difficult to keep up, but watch for some of the following milestones most five year olds can achieve.

- follows group directions - "all the boys get a toy"
- understands directions involving "if...then"  
- "If you're wearing runners, then line up for gym"
- describes past, present and future events in detail
- seeks to please his/her friends
- shows increasing independence in friendships - may visit neighbour by him/herself
- uses almost all of the sounds of their language with few to no errors
- knows all the letters of the alphabet
- identifies the sounds at the beginning of some words - "Pop starts with the 'puh' sound"

# Games to Play

Someone wrote, a long time ago, that there is nothing so fertile as the imagination of a child. When your child reaches five years of age, you'll **know** this is true. Imagination runs wild and the most wonderful images and stories will emerge, if only we take the time to listen and respond.

Five year olds love acting out long stories with plots and playing the roles of characters. Children are often natural "hams" and nothing gives them greater pleasure than to perform the plays they've created. A curtain or an open door can provide the "stage". All they need is a receptive audience. And that audience is **you**, your family and friends!

Here are a few sample games that five year olds love!

- Dressing up like you and playing grown-up.
- Imaginative scenarios. Nurture your child's imagination by turning your kitchen into a restaurant or your basement into a space ship.
- Playing checkers and card games like "Snap" and "Tic Tac Toe".

Child: "First, we have to get the eggs and crack them. Then we put them in the bowl with milk and mix'em. Then pour it in the fry pan..."

Mom: "Good! ...And after we eat it... then what?"

Child: WE clean up!!!!"

- Games like "I spy". Take turns saying "I spy a word that rhymes with..." or "I spy a word that starts with the "p" sound".
- Singing silly songs with rhymes, for instance, "Down by the Bay".
- Learning time concepts by writing important events on a calendar and using words like, "yesterday", "tomorrow", "next week" or "next month".





- Helping to make shopping lists. Let your child suggest fruits, vegetables and meats you need.
- Helping around the house. Doing small household chores helps build self-confidence and respect. Remember to suggest small jobs that aren't too hard.
- Being read to. As you read, use descriptive words that help teach reading – words like "top / bottom of the page", "first, middle, last", "beginning and ending", "letters, words, sentences, story" and "sounds, rhymes".

**Doing small household chores helps build a five year old's confidence and respect. Keep tasks minor.**

## When to be concerned

As with other earlier ages, you may notice warning signs and behavioural speech and language patterns in your five year old that concern you. For instance:

- If your child is excessively “shy” and won’t interact with other children or adults, or...
- If your child’s average sentence length is less than five words, or...
- If your child doesn’t use grammar similar to that used by the rest of the family.

Call your local pre-school speech-language program as soon as possible. The professionals there will be glad to advise you.

# **Special Memories**

Five years



## **A Final Word**

## A Final Word

By taking the time and effort to help children develop a love of life and strong sense of understanding, you give them the greatest gift – you give them a head start on life.

By watching for signs of difficulty in hearing or speech and by actively involving yourself in teaching and showing your child ways to communicate through words, actions and play, you are providing a healthy, happy childhood that forms the foundation of a healthy, happy adult.

Many of the activities we've presented here for different age ranges will continue to entertain your child long past the time-frame suggested. Visits to the zoo and outings of any sort will always be lifelong pleasures as long as you and your child enjoy each other's company.

Always remember: **It is impossible to spoil a child with honest expressions of affection and praise.**

“Let your child know and see that  
you think he or she is wonderful.  
Say it often! Show it often!  
Because when you do,  
you’re helping your child  
grow with communication.”

**Congratulations and good luck!**

# Simple Songs and Rhymes for Parent's of Young Children

Here are some of the songs and rhymes. Feel free to be playful with these, and make up your own.

## **"Peek a boo "**

Parent's hands cover eyes, then moves them apart to smile broadly and repeat "peek-a-boo"

## **This little piggy**

(Child's toes are the little pigs)

"This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home, this little piggy had roast beef, this little piggy had none, and this little piggy cried wee, wee, wee, wee all the way home!"

Modified Version my kids got;

This little piggy went to market, this little piggy stayed home, this little piggy had roast beef, and this little piggy had none, and this little piggy was a hip little piggy and he boogie, woogied all the way home!"

## **Pat-a-cake**

"Pat a cake, pat a cake baker's man,  
bake me a cake as fast as you can,  
Roll it, pat it and marked it with a (whatever the letter of your child's name begins with) and put it in the oven for baby and me."

## **"So big"**

Parent to child "How much do I love you?"

Parent spreads hands and arms far apart and responds,  
"Sooooo big!"

## **Head and Shoulders**

"Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes,  
knees and toes,  
Head and shoulders, knees and toes, eyes, ears,  
mouth and nose."

### **Round and Round the Garden**

"Round and round the garden, goes the teddy bear"

- drawing circles in child's palm,

"One foot, two feet, tickle him(her) under there"

- have your fingers "walk" up child's arm and gently tickle.

### **Bear's Gonna Get You or I'm gonna get you**

This is a game you can play with your child either with or without a teddy bear. Have the teddy bear act as a puppet, and as you use your voice to build anticipation, "walk" the teddy bear to give your baby a "kiss", or you playfully say "I'm gonna get you" then give you child a kiss or hug.

### **Row, Row, Row your Boat**

"Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream,  
merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
life is but a dream."

### **Itsy, Bitsy Spider**

(use fingers to show spider and rain)

"Itsy, bitsy spider went up the water spout,

Down came the rain and washed the spider out,

Out came the sun and dried up all the rain, so

the itsy bitsy spider came up the spout again"

Version with exaggerated arm movements to show

"Big" Charlie

"Big Charlie spider came up the water spout,

Down came the rain and washed Big Charlie out,

Out came the sun and dried up all the rain,

So Big Charlie spider came up the spout again."

### **"Where is Thumbkin"**

(finger song, where parent use their thumbs as little puppets)

"Where is Thumbkin? Where is Thumbkin?

Here I am! Here I am!

How are you today sir?

Very well I thank you.

Run a way, run away."

Can sing the song, with "pointer", "ring man", "baby" using different fingers of the adult's hand as different "finger puppets"



### **Down by the Bay**

"Down by the Bay, Down by the Bay  
Where the watermelons grow, Where the watermelons grow,  
Back to my home, back to my home,  
I dare not go, I dare not go,  
For if I did, my mother would say,  
Have you ever seen a bear in green underwear?  
Down by the Bay"

Continue by changing the finish with other rhyming words,  
for example:

Have you ever seen a pig doing a jig?,  
or ever seen a fish cleaning a dish?

The rhyming is endless and can be as ridiculous as you can  
be creative!



Grandview's Preschool Speech and Language Program works with families and early years professionals in Durham Region to ensure children receive the help and support they need to reach their communication milestones and be school-ready.

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To make a referral: please call: 1-800-304-6180 or 905-728-1673 x 2468 or Fax: to 905-728-2961.