

# JUST USE YOUR WORDS

One of the most important things you can give your baby is free: It's your words. Parents and caregivers play an important role in a baby's earliest phase of development.

Babies are like sponges, taking in sights and sounds around them all the time. You can help your baby soak up the world by talking to them, in words you use every day.

In Allegheny County, we want every child to have a bright future. And research tells us that those futures have a great start if parents and other caregivers simply talk, face-to-face, to their little ones.



Babies are like sponges...

When it comes to how much you should talk to your baby, the simple answer is:

**the more the better.**

# USE YOUR WORDS

**Talk to your baby early and often.**

Content for the Use Your Words campaign is sourced from the following:

The University of Kansas – *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Brookes Publishing: Boston MA. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, authors

ZERO TO THREE

The National Literacy Trust (UK)

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services is responsible for providing and administering publicly funded human services to county residents.

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For more information about Use Your Words, visit:  
[WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX](http://WWW.ALLEGHENYCOUNTY.US/DHS/USE-YOUR-WORDS.ASPX)



Your Baby is Listening and Learning



Talking to your baby is one of the best things you can do to nurture development ...



## THE SCIENCE: WHY IT WORKS

Parents or daily caregivers are a child's first teachers. They influence learning. Researchers say children learn to read and write by being around and watching adults. Children learn to talk that way, too, so talking to your baby regularly from the time he or she is an infant is very important.

In other **words**:

- Your baby will learn better from hearing familiar voices and being engaged by his caregiver. Educational television and electronics may only grab babies' attention for a short time. Your baby needs to hear your voice and to see you talking.
- Your voice lets your little one know she is cared for. To bond with your baby, talk to her.
- The more words and conversation your baby hears from you, family members and caregivers, the better his communication will be when he starts using his own words.

## THE FAMILY CONVERSATION

You don't need to have separate conversations with your children based on their age. Just start talking and encourage everyone to chime in. Your toddler's language skills will grow by hearing you, no matter what you are discussing.

Talking sparks curiosity, which is a stepping stone to learning. So bring your child into the conversation wherever possible so he or she can learn.

*Talking  
sparks curiosity...*

## WHAT YOU CAN TALK ABOUT

You don't have to work at talking to your baby, toddler, or young child. Even gentle, everyday conversations help your child to grow and learn. If you are unsure of what to talk about, try these:

- 1 Explain what you're doing right now and why. "I'm making pancakes for breakfast because that is my favorite food."
- 2 Read to her. Keep her favorite books—or even your favorites—close by.
- 3 Sing—at home, in the car, or even at the grocery store.
- 4 Tell him about happy times in your life—maybe a birthday party, a special trip, or a best friend.
- 5 Talk about your plans. "Tomorrow is going to be a fun day; we are going to the zoo."

You'll be surprised at how these simple conversations can lead to more talking and learning for your baby.