



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

## Speech and Language Development in Young Children

Have you ever been concerned about a child's speech or language development? If you have, you're not alone. A 2019 poll conducted by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) found that one in four parents of children ages 0-8 are concerned about their child's ability to communicate.

Although 'speech' and 'language' are related terms, they are two different skills. "Speech" refers to one's ability to produce speech sounds. "Language" has two parts: receptive language, which refers to one's ability to understand language; and expressive language, one's ability to share thoughts and ideas. For example, a child with a **speech delay** may have difficulty pronouncing speech sounds or have problems with speech fluency. A child with a **language delay** may have difficulty comprehending what others are saying or difficulty sharing her thoughts, ideas and feelings.

It is important to be aware that just as with other skills, children develop speech and language at their own pace. Knowing a bit about speech and language development can help parents determine when to seek help. Speech and language delays are highly treatable, and the earlier the child receives the needed speech or language support, the better the outcome will be for her. Families are encouraged to talk to their child's health care provider or call the Hawai'i Early Intervention Referral Line at 594-0066 or 1-800-235-5477 (Neighbor Islands) for any questions or concerns regarding a child's development. These services are free!

In this newsletter, we will present information

to help you track your child's speech and language development. We will also discuss general speech and language milestones at each age level, and strategies to promote speech and language development in infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

In this newsletter, we will present information to help you track your child's speech and language development. We will also discuss general speech and language milestones at each age level, and strategies to promote speech and language development in infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

From birth until about 3 months, most infants cry, coo, and respond to their caregivers' voices and faces. Between 6 and 12 months, your baby is likely starting to babble and recognize her name, and by one year of age may recognize names of common items such as "shoe," and say one or two words such as "mama" or "dada".

Here are some things you can do to encourage an infant's speech and language development:

- ♥ **Talk to your baby whenever she is awake** - what you're doing, what she's doing/looking at, what you're going to do, eat, etc.
- ♥ **Label objects throughout the course of the day**, such as "milk."
- ♥ **Ask your baby questions about familiar objects**, such as, "Where's the cup?" and encourage her to point to it. Say, "Yes, there it is!"
- ♥ **Sing to your baby.**
- ♥ **Read to your baby** from large colorful picture books and encourage her to turn the pages



## Activity for Infants: *This Little "Piggy"*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Substitute your child's name for "Piggy" in the following rhyme.
2. Touch each of baby's finger or toe one at a time as you recite the following poem:  
*This little (Ellie) went to the market.  
 This little (Ellie) stayed home.  
 This little (Ellie) had roast beef.  
 This little (Ellie) had none.  
 And this little (Ellie) went...  
 'Wee wee wee wee wee' all the way home!*
3. Before you say the 'wee wee wee' part, slow down and build suspense. Then say the last line faster than the rest.
4. While saying, "wee wee wee" you can do many things like tickle baby, dance around holding baby, or gently shake baby's hand or foot

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*



# Toddlers

During the toddler years, children begin to understand more words. In general, children understand words before they use them. They may begin to name common pictures in a book and combine words in short phrases and sentences (e.g., “Me do it.”) At age two, your child may be able to follow simple two-step directions such as, “pick up the ball and bring it to Daddy.” By age three, she may use short sentences to announce what she is doing, tell stories, and begin to understand prepositional phrases, such as “Put the book on the table.” Parents and regular caregivers should be able to understand about 50% of a two year old’s speech, and about 75% of a three year old’s speech.

Here are some things you can do to encourage your toddler’s speech and language development:

- ♥ **At the end of the day, talk to your child about what she did during the day or plans to do tomorrow.** For example, “*What are some of the things we did today? What did we do at the library today?*” Or ask, “*We are going to visit Tūtū tomorrow. What shall we do at Tūtū’s house?*”
- ♥ **Play make-believe games,** such as pretending to go camping in a “tent” (a blanket over a dining table makes a nice tent).
- ♥ **Read favorite books over and over** and encourage your child to join in with words she knows. Encourage child-directed reading by pausing at repetitive phrases to let your child join in or having your child tell you what’s happening by looking at the illustrations on each page.



## Activity for Toddlers: *Caring for Teddy*

What You Need:

A teddy bear or any other stuffed animal

What to Do:

1. Give your toddler simple directions. For example, “Rock teddy in your arms.” “Give teddy a kiss.” “Hold teddy up in the air.” “Tickle teddy on the tummy.” “Have teddy wave ‘bye-bye.’” “Wiggle teddy’s toes.”
2. Show your child how to do the different actions by demonstrating on her, or by demonstrating on another teddy or stuffed animal. Then ask her to do it with her stuffed animal.
3. Praise her for taking good care of teddy.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



# Preschoolers

As children gain language skills, they also develop conversational skills. She may make up stories, talk about the things she does, listen attentively to stories, and retell stories with confidence. She may include five or more words in her sentences and have a more extensive vocabulary.

Preschoolers are also learning to follow more complex two to three step directions (e.g., “Get your socks, turn off your light, and come down stairs.”) Speech at this age should be understandable, although there may be some developmental articulation (sound) errors and dysfluency (disruption in the flow of speech, such as stuttering).

Here are some things you can do to encourage your preschooler’s speech and language development:



- ♥ **Read a variety of books**, including poems, rhyming stories, and informational books (e.g., non-fiction books about dinosaurs).
- ♥ **Help verbalize the use of objects.** For example, ask her, “What do we use to brush our teeth?”
- ♥ **When talking with her, include positional and directional words** such as “under,” “behind,” “beside,” “in front,” “around,” “first,” “last,” etc.

## Activity for Preschoolers: *Create a Story*

What You Need:

None

What to Do:

1. Create a story with your child.
2. Ask her to think of someone or something; for example, a person she sees often, like her grandpa, or an animal, or a flower.
3. Start the story by making up something about the person or item she chose. For example, if she picked “turtle,” you might say, “A little green honu (turtle) lived in the ocean.”
4. Ask your child to add the next line to the story.
5. Continue taking turns adding to the story. Let her take the lead in directing the story. Don’t worry about whether the story makes sense. Have fun with it. If she needs help with ideas, ask a few questions, for example:
  - o What is the honu’s name?
  - o What does she like to do?
  - o Who does she like to play with?
  - o What does she see as she swims in the ocean?
6. Write down the story to share again later.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*



## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles, e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes
- ♥ Learn to use her body with intention

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Recognize herself as separate and from other people
- ♥ Learn to interact and cooperate with others

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Increase her observation, listening and understanding skills, and her attention span



### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination
- ♥ Develop her thinking and problem solving skills

## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise her efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

### Teddy Bear Cheese Biscuits

Adapted from <https://www.kids-cooking-activities.com/teddy-bear-tea-party.html>

Ingredients:

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 cup margarine or butter, melted   | 1 cup sour cream |
| 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese | 2 cups flour     |



Directions:

1. Have your child help combine all ingredients together in a bowl.
2. As you mix the ingredients (using a mixer or with a whisk), talk about how the ingredients are blending together.
3. Together, pat the dough into a ball, and roll dough out flat.
4. Talk to your child about how to use a cookie cutter and together cut out biscuits using a teddy bear (or other shaped) cookie cutter.
5. Place the cut shapes onto a pan and bake in a 350 degree oven for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.
6. After making the biscuits, you can encourage your child to have a “Teddy Bear Tea Party!” Have your child bring her teddy bears or stuffed animals to the party and have a magical time together eating the biscuits and sipping water or milk from a tea cup

## Resources

How can you tell if a child's speech and language development is on track? You can monitor your child's speech and language by using a milestone checklist. A milestone checklist outlines behavior and skills that most children demonstrate at a given age, and can help parents and care providers understand typical development.

Here are examples of milestone checklists.

- ♥ **CDC's Developmental Milestones** (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>)
- ♥ **America Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Identify the Signs.** (<https://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/chart/>).



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

***My Very First Mother Goose*** Edited by Iona Opie, Illustrated by Rosemary Wells  
The most magical of all words are the beloved words of Mother Goose. This book gathered more than sixty treasured rhymes in their most perfect, honest forms, from "Hey Diddle, Diddle" and "Pat-a-Cake" to "Little Jack Horner" and "Pussycat, Pussycat."

***Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear*** Illustrated by Michael Hague  
This is a classic action rhyme that you can act out with your child! As you read the rhyme, perform the actions described in the story as your child follows along.

### Preschoolers

***A Child's Garden of Verses*** by Robert Louis Stevenson  
In this collection of sixty-six poems, Stevenson recalls the joys of his childhood, from sailing boats down a river, to waiting for the lamplighter, to sailing off to foreign lands in his imagination.

***Some Smug Slug*** by Pamela Duncan Edwards  
This hilarious read-aloud picture book tells a cautionary tale about a slug who must climb a slippery slope, in spite of the animals who are trying to stop him. This alliterative tale will have children snorting out loud at the surprise ending for this very smug slug. Detailed illustrations include a hidden "S" on every page.



**Learning to Grow** is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at [www.learningtogrowhawaii.org](http://www.learningtogrowhawaii.org) or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii](https://www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii)