



Talk, Sing, and Point



Talking with your child and answering questions helps build their vocabulary and teaches them about the world. Talking, singing, and pointing are ways to provide clues to the meaning of what you are saying. Use your own ideas or choose from the list of suggestions below. Select activities that best correspond with your child's current stage of development. Any activity may be counted repeatedly.

1. Nursery rhymes are fun to sing and say with your child.
2. Play *I Spy* while you and your child wait in the doctor's office.
3. Sing the traditional alphabet song with your child.
4. Sing familiar songs with your child, over and over (*Old MacDonald, The Itsy Bitsy Spider, etc.*).
5. As you go about your day, tell your child what you are doing. Children learn new words this way.
6. Play games in which your child finds objects of particular colors and shapes around the house.
7. Go to the zoo and make animal sounds with your child.
8. Make signs to label objects in your child's room or other rooms in the house and point to the sign as you say the name of the object.
9. Provide magnetic letters for your child to practice forming his name and words he wants to know.
10. Provide your child with plenty of opportunities to draw on blank paper. Ask her questions about the pictures she draws. Let her describe the pictures on her own.
11. When your baby points at something, talk about it.
12. Give your child your full attention when you respond to a question from him.
13. Gently shake your baby's toy as you say its name.
14. Let your child see you reading and writing, even if it's a grocery list, and share what you're reading or writing.
15. Use the real words for objects when talking to your child—*train* instead of *choo-choo*, *owl* instead of *birdy*.
16. Visit a museum with your child and talk about the works of art even if she can't talk yet.
17. Diaper changing time is a great opportunity to incorporate singing. This can help calm a wiggly baby or toddler. Pick favorite, familiar songs to sing, such as the alphabet song, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, or another favorite.
18. Clap or tap on a drum while saying your child's name or sing his name. This allows him to hear words slowed down so that he can distinguish the parts of words (syllables).
19. Sing to your child when doing everyday activities and sing about the activity.
20. Turn an errand into a fun learning game that helps your child make sense of the surrounding world. If she likes trucks, look for trucks as you drive and see who can yell "truck" first.
21. When walking through the grocery store, point out different fruits, vegetables, and other foods. Describe them to your child. This is a great opportunity to introduce new vocabulary through shapes, colors, and numbers.
22. Name the foods you are eating and talk about foods your baby loves to eat.
23. Use car travel as a time to sing with your child. Play a tape or CD or sing songs you know and love. You can also make up songs about what you are seeing along the road or sing along with the radio. Singing about everyday activities helps children enjoy the sounds of language and helps babies begin to associate words with good experiences. Singing also creates a sense of togetherness.

24. Use car time to talk about your child's day. Ask specific questions ("Did you draw in preschool?" or "Did you eat a cheese sandwich?") rather than general ones ("How was your day?") because they are easier for young children to answer. Help your child talk about past experiences to enhance his memory.

25. Sing *Old MacDonald* with your child. Try using stuffed animals or puppets with this song.

26. Gently bounce your baby on your lap while you sing a simple song like *To Market, To Market*.

27. Holding your baby facing out, walk around the room, pointing to objects and saying their names.

28. Ask your child to point to and touch the parts of her face, your face

29. Point out different vehicles when you see them. Ask your child what sound they make.

30. Check out a children's music CD from your library with a freeze song on it. Play the song. You and your child dance together and freeze when the music stops. You could also download music to your phone. Play it and stop it when it's time to freeze.

31. When driving or walking past a construction site, ask your child to name the different vehicles he sees.

32. Check out a construction vehicle book from the library to learn specific construction vocabulary with your child.

33. Try different healthy foods with your child and talk about how they taste (sweet, sour, etc.).

34. Point out signs you see and read them aloud. This helps your child know that words and reading are everywhere!

35. Sing a motion song, such as *Tony Chestnut*, or *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* with your little one. Sing the song several times, getting faster each time!

36. Tell your child you're putting a straw in her drink, or you're opening the top of her applesauce while showing her how. As she gets older, have her try each task to build self-confidence.

37. Play the game "Hot or Cold" with your child. In this game, he has to hide an object (or himself) and tell you whether you're hot (close to the object) or cold (far away).

38. Say your child's name often and point out the first letter of her name. When you're reading together, have your child find words that start with

the first letter of her name.

39. In a positive experience (like playing), verbally let your child know you see what he is doing/saying. When you are interested in what he does and says, it helps him know he is being seen and heard and builds his confidence.

40. Point out to your child the position or direction of different things you see each day. The apple is on the plate, the dog is under the table, the sun is in the sky.

41. Extend your child's phrases to expand vocabulary. When she says, "Go park.", respond, "You want to play outside at the park today. We can visit it this afternoon."

42. Ask your child how he's feeling. Respond with examples of things/situations that used to or still make you feel the same way.

43. When you and your child play together, this helps her build confidence! Allowing her to tell you what to do helps her develop communication skills.

44. Play *I Spy* when you read to your child. Point to a color on the page and ask him to find other things with the same color.

45. Teach your child simple action songs and enjoy some together. This helps increase her timing skills and improve her ability to work with others.

46. Use simple images that depict your daily routine. Post them somewhere visible and have your child point to what's next on the list when it's time for that activity.

47. Jumping the ABCs is fun and helps your child hear all the letters of the alphabet. You can do this together, one jump for every letter, especially L-M-N-O-P because they tend to get squished together.

48. Have your child point to stop signs, street signs, yield signs, and other traffic signs when riding in the car. Ask her to describe the shapes and colors she sees.

49. Go outside when the stars come out and sing *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* with your child as you both look up.

50. Sing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* while bouncing your baby on your knee. Start slowly and then gradually sing it faster.

51. Have your child point to different parts of the pictures in a favorite story. You don't have to read the words at all, just turn the pages and ask him to

find and point out known objects. Point to and name the objects he doesn't know yet.

52. Make a photo album for your child with pictures of family members and friends. Name these important people while pointing to each one. Your child will soon point to the correct photo when you ask, "Where is Papa?" She'll also give an answer when you point and ask, "Who is that?"

53. In the waiting room, tell your child what to expect when he sees the doctor and nurse. Use dialog like this: "The nurse will use a wrap to squeeze your arm. The doctor will shine a light in your ear. Can you show me how you will sit still for them?"

54. During your child's bath time, name the parts of her body as you wash them. Give her a washcloth and ask her to wash her elbow, ankle, chin, etc.

55. At bedtime, have your preschooler "retell" you what he did today or tell you what he will do tomorrow. Prompt him with questions, such as, "Where did you go with Daddy today?" and "What will we have for breakfast tomorrow?"

56. Help your child to express herself. Say, "Use your words" to encourage your child to communicate feelings and needs; for example, "You feel hungry. You want crackers in your bowl."

57. While singing a song, emphasize the words that fall on the beat by stomping or clapping on each beat. You can even have your child stomp or clap harder on the downbeat (the most accented note in each measure). There is no wrong way to do this so feel free to experiment.

58. Offer your child an instrument, such as a xylophone (or piano, if you have one in your home), shaker, drum, or even a pot and a wooden spoon, to play a song. Ask him to play his instrument at a specific note of a simple song, such as on star of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, as you play the rest.

59. Listening to rain on the roof and rain falling into a puddle are different experiences. A soft rain also sounds different from a hard rain. Listen to the rain sounds with your child and try to replicate the sounds of rain using a pot or a wood block, a drum or a shaker.

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61. To help your child develop a rich vocabulary, try using new and interesting words to talk about something familiar; for example, *automobile* instead of *car*, *lovely* instead of *nice*, *humongous* instead of *big*, *dice* instead of *chop*.

62. Sing *The Wheels on the Bus* with your child. This song actually teaches him how things work, a general knowledge he will need for kindergarten readiness.

63. Once you've sung *The Wheels on the Bus* many times with your child, try substituting different places or events, such as *on our way to the library* instead of *all around the town*. Include people who work at the library; for instance, *The children's librarian says read, read, read*.

64. Listen to music often to help your child learn the difference between loud and soft. She needs to know when a loud voice is ok, and when a soft voice is required.

65. Even little rhymes help children gain an understanding of the world. Sing *Two Little Blackbirds* with your child. This song tells the story of two birds who sit and watch, fly away, and then return, just as real birds do.

66. Singing songs or rhymes about himself while pointing to the parts of his body helps develop your child's self-awareness and will help build his confidence.

67. Talk about the pictures as you read a book to your child and/or let your child tell you what's happening on a page of her favorite book.

68. You and your child can talk about what happened while you were on an errand together. Any daily event can later become a story if a child wants to tell it. A trip to the supermarket can become a quest to find the tortillas.

69. It's common for young children to request the same book again and again. Re-reading familiar stories together offers your child a chance to absorb information over time and lets her master the whole story.

70. Read your child's favorite books and let him fill in familiar sounds, such as animal noises, or phrases, such as familiar rhymes.

71. Help your child make up a story starring some of her favorite stuffed animals. Work together to turn this story into a short, simple book.

72. Make up a fairy tale together. Take turns adding to the story. You could start with, "Once upon a time,

there was a big brown dog. The dog saw a squirrel and then..."

73. Speak with expression as you read books aloud to your child. Try using different voices for each character to make reading more exciting for her.

74. When something exciting happens in a story, talk to your child about what he might do in that situation.

75. When you read a book to your child, you can tell her the author's name and the illustrator's name, explaining what an author does and what an illustrator does. This helps build your child's vocabulary and her knowledge of how books work.

76. Look at photos of your child and "read" the pictures with him. Ask: "What was special about that memory? What are you doing in the picture?"

77. After you read it to her, have your child retell the story to you.

78. Run your finger under the words as you read. Your child will learn that you are reading text, not pictures, and that words go from left to right and top to bottom.

79. Ask your child to tell you a story about his day, or tell him a story about your day, during mealtime.

80. Read stories or poems that rhyme to your child.

81. It is never too early to introduce your child to books. Babies like books made from cloth or heavy paper with pictures of other babies. They also like books with pictures of everyday objects or animals. Hold your baby on your lap and let her look at books. Name things that are in the books and show your baby the real life object, such as the "nose" in the picture and the nose on your face.