

Being The Bridge: Building Language While You Wait

(for Parents of Children Newborn – 2 1/2 years of age)

This webinar was created by the York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program to provide parents with information on the role of attachment and routines in language development, insight into how communication develops from birth, as well as practical strategies to promote your child's understanding and use of language at home.

Reviewing this course will provide you will suggestions for getting ready for your speech and language assessment and some strategies to get you started while you wait. Specific questions and concerns about your child's communication and social skill development will be reviewed during your assessment. Click the link below to get started!

<https://childdevelopmentprograms.ca/elearning-modules/being-the-bridge/>



The following 2 pages contain a written summary of the information presented in the course.

Should I be concerned? Review the speech and language milestone expectations [here](#).

Preparing for your assessment:

- Concerns about your child's overall skill development should be referred to your paediatrician or family doctor. This may be done prior to or in combination with a speech and language assessment.
- Hearing Assessment for children can be accessed free of charge through the Children's Treatment Centre of Chatham-Kent. Parents can self-refer by calling **519-354-0520**
- Vision Testing is covered by OHIP for children under 18 years of age. Up to 80% of a child's learning happens through their eyes! Find an optometrist [here](#).

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Setting the Stage for Language Development

- **Attachment** – a strong bond between child and a responsive caregiver is important for brain development and sets up a strong foundation for language learning
- **Routines** – consistent daily patterns that help the child to learn and feel safe knowing what will happen next
- **Transition Rituals** – special songs, items or actions that help your child to complete daily tasks with less stress
- These 3 supports help your child to feel, calm, confident and ready to learn language

Communication Development

- Children communicate for different reasons, including requesting, protesting, and sharing an experience.
- Parents should respond positively to all of a child's attempts to communicate. Your responses motivate your child to be intentional and persistent in their attempts to communicate.
- Multi-lingual families are encouraged to speak their home language with their child, the strategies discussed here can easily be adapted to any language. More information on children learning more than one language can be found [here](#).

By 30 months of age children should progress through the following 4 stages of communication development. Determine which stage your child needs to develop next. Follow the tips to support development at each stage.



1 Tips to Encourage Pre-intentional Communication

- All babies communicate from birth. They use movements, sounds and facial expressions.
- Respond to your child's sounds and actions as if they were "saying" something.
- Talk to your baby, sing songs and read books together every day. These activities give your baby opportunities to learn words and begin to develop intentional communication.

2 Tips to Encourage Intentional Communication

- **Get down to your child's level** – this makes it easier for your child to watch, imitate and interact with you
- **Play people games** – examples include peek-a-boo, chase and tickles. These games have predictable routines that encourage social interaction, turn-taking, anticipation, and opportunities to send messages



- **Encourage pointing** – model the use of pointing when you are talking or reading books, you may need to help you child shape their hand into a point so they can give it a try too
- **Encourage gestures** – model gestures and allow opportunities for your child to copy you, reinforce the use of gestures to communicate by responding to the child’s message, e.g. child points to their highchair, caregiver says “you want to eat!”
- **Songs with actions** – another way to practice gestures, start by modelling, then help you child make the gesture, last let them try on their own. Repeat these songs often to help your child learn the gestures and words

3 Tips to Encourage First Words

- **Get down to your child’s level** – this makes it easier for you so see what your child is interested in and model language to match
- **Follow your child’s lead** – wait, watch, and allow your child to find activities that interest them, children learn language best when it matches the activity they are engaged in
- **Wait for your child to communicate, then respond** – avoid asking too many questions and ensure there is time for your child to communicate with words, sounds or gestures
- **Give a reason (communication temptation)** – motivate your child to communicate, model a word they can use to get the item/activity they want, some examples:
 - **Need Help** – Put an item in a clear container or leave a snack in its wrapper, model “help” or “open” for your child to imitate to tell you they need help
 - **Give a Choice** – hold two items out of reach, offer a choice and wait for your child to imitate the word or point to their choice, e.g. “do you want grapes or berries?”
 - **Make it a Game** – add a pause to your activity, model the word “go” or “more” for your child to imitate to get you to continue the activity
- To avoid frustrating your child, model the word, offer them a chance to imitate, if they don’t, model the word again and give the child the item. You can try again next time!



4 Tips to Encourage Combining (after approx. 50 single words)

- **Model 2-3 words** – speak to your child using short phrases that they can understand and imitate
- **Expand on your child’s message** – repeat back what your child says and add one more word, e.g. child: “car” parent: “red car”, child: “help me” parent “help me open”
- **Give a reason (communication temptation)**
 - **Need Help** – Put an item in a clear container or leave a snack in its wrapper, model “help me” or “open snack” for your child to tell you they need help
 - **Give a Choice** – hold two items out of reach, offer a choice and wait for your child to imitate the word(s) for their choice, e.g. “do you want green grapes or red berries?”
 - **Make it a Game** – add a pause to your activity, model the words “my turn” or “play more” for your child to imitate to get you to continue the activity
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat** – use the same words in different ways, e.g. “on” could be “hat on”, “lights on”, “on top”, “on your head”, etc.

