

## Tip Sheets

### Infant and Toddler Communication Skills: Building Relationships



The development of speech and language is best promoted in the context of relationships (Lerner & Ciervo, 2004).

It is through relationships with the important caregivers in their lives that children:

- Learn new information.
- Are exposed to new activities.
- Experience the world around them.

By talking, reading, and singing with infants and toddlers on a daily basis, caregivers are providing the necessary interactional experiences to promote the development of speech and language.

Studies have shown a correlation between the amount of language that children hear and their speech and language growth.

The more words and conversations children hear, the better.

- Talk to infants and toddlers during routine activities.
- Give children new words through daily interactions such as feeding and diapering.
- Provide an environment that offers enjoyable and positive interactive experiences.

It is estimated that the daily activities of feeding, diapering, and dressing occur at least 2,000 times during the first year of a child's life (Dunst, Trivette & Raab, 2013). Each of these interactions provides an opportunity for relationship-building, which in

turn supports the learning and development of communication skills.

Caregiver characteristics important in the development of communication skills

- The ability to accurately read a child's cues
- Understanding that a child's cues are attempts to communicate
- Caregiver's responses to the child reinforce and encourage continued interactions
- The ability to engage reciprocally with the child in a turn-taking manner
- Caregiver's use of responsive teaching—i.e. promoting opportunities for social and emotional development and learning

#### Additional Resources

Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Talking is Teaching  
<http://talkingisteaching.org>

Zero to Three  
<http://www.zerotothree.org>

For more information, visit [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org).

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