

“Talk to Me!”

Oral language development
with young children

At home



At work



At school



In the
community



Acknowledgements

The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit group that supports literacy development in all NWT official languages. For more information on children's speech and language development, or any of our other work, please contact us.

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Children Need Language:

To ask questions;
to answer questions.

To speak so others can understand; to listen.

To follow directions;
to give directions.

To tell stories;
to hear other's stories.

To hear, and understand what others say.

Children Develop Language Over Time

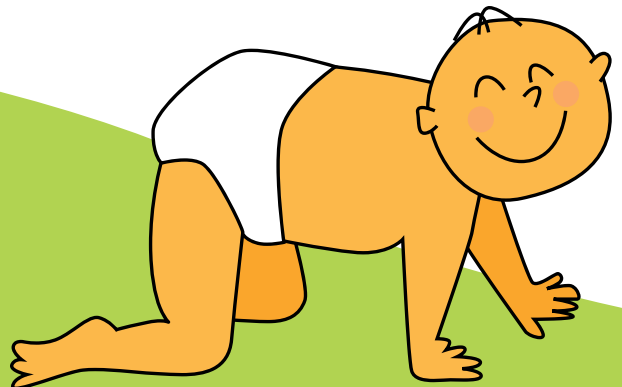
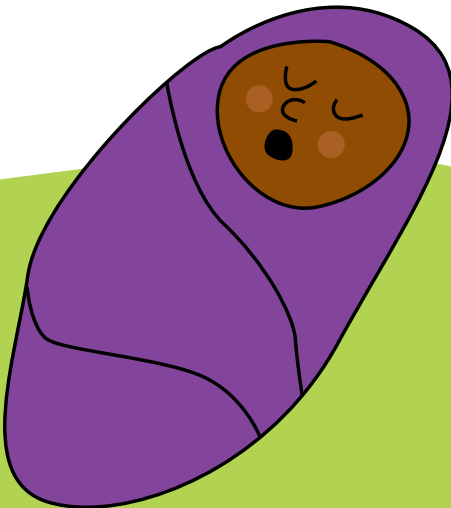
What you can expect babies to do:

6-8 months

Babble, use other noises to get attention, recognize voices, understand simple words.

1 year

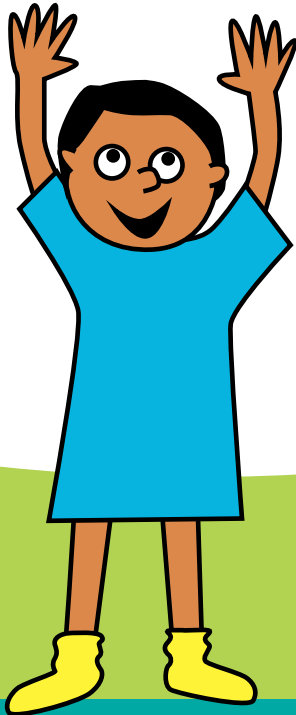
Start to speak for a reason. Say their first word. Parents understand 25% of what they say.



What you can expect toddlers to do:

2 years

Combine two words, follow simple directions, repeat what they hear, often say 'NO'.
Parents understand 50 to 75% of what they say.



3 years

Say three or four words together, ask 'why', start to have conversations, follow simple directions. Parents understand 75 to 100% of what they say.



Children Develop Language Over Time

What you can expect preschoolers to do:

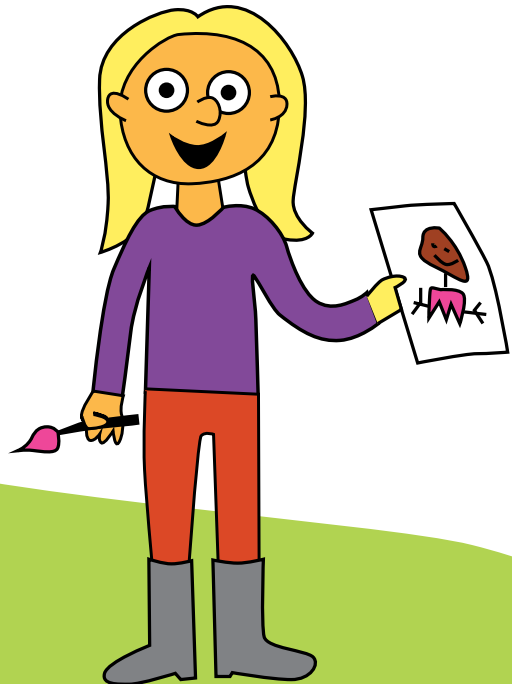
4 years

Ask lots of questions, tell stories, talk about past and future, and have longer conversations. Parents understand 100% of what they say.



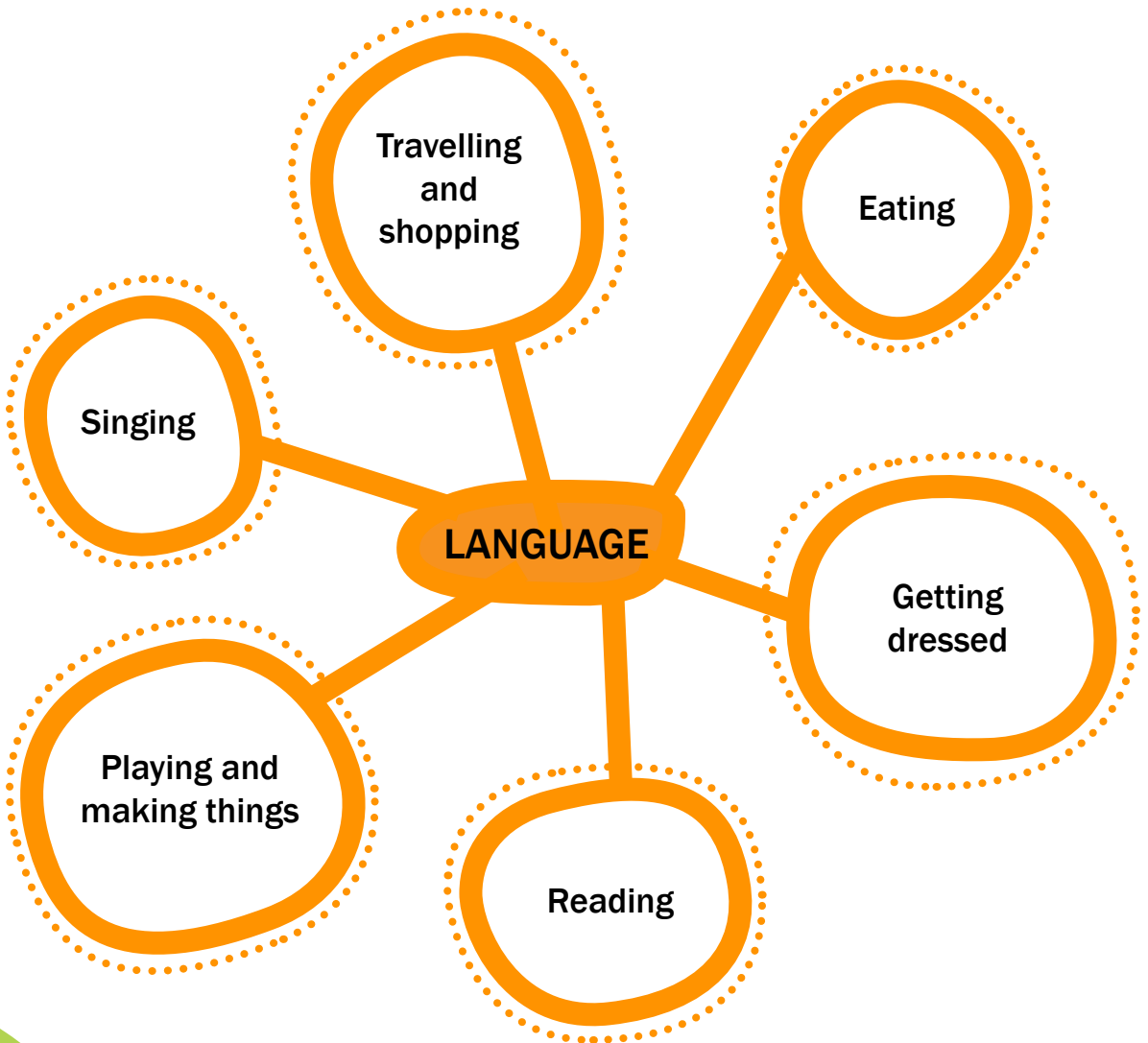
5 years

Ask 'why' and 'how' questions, use complete sentences, have long detailed conversations. Everyone understands.



How Can You Help at Home?

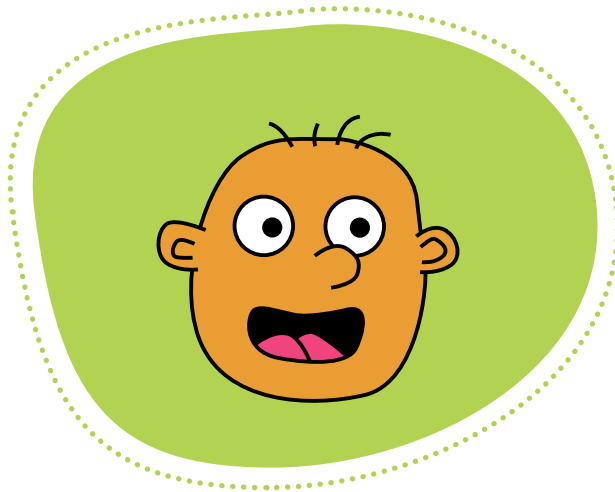
Practise language as you do everyday things with your child:



How Can You Help at Home?

TODDLERS

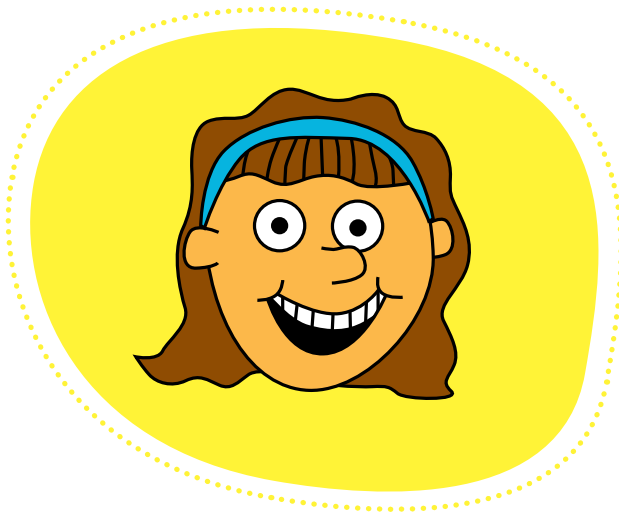
- **Let your child be the leader.** Do things with your child, let your child choose the activity, follow along.
- **Repeat single words often.**
- **Use short simple sentences.** Use two to three words together when your child uses one word. Use four to five words when your child uses two to three words.
- **Wait for your child to talk.** Give them time. Listen, respond, and encourage them.



How Can You Help at Home?

PRESCHOOLERS

- **Repeat what your child says.** Use correct words and complete sentences.
- **Add new words to what your child says.**
- **Use lots of describing words:** size, shape, colour, how something is used, what it's used for.
- **Have conversations with your child.** Ask what they think about things, respect what they say.



Trust Your Instincts. What to Watch for.

Ask a health care provider if you have questions.
Or if your child:

- Talks less than most children the same age.
- Uses fewer words than most children the same age.
- Can't get other people to understand what they say.
- Develops no new language skills for six months.



Trust Your Instincts. What to Watch for.

Ask a health care provider if you have questions.
Or if your child:

- Often stutters or repeats sounds or words.
- Seems not to hear sounds or understand simple words when you speak.
- Has a voice that sounds odd or hoarse, for more than three weeks, and not because they have a cold or infection.



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